A RHETORIC OF DIVINITY:
THE NICENE CREED AS DISCIPLINED DISCOURSE

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Trouble in Alexandria: An Introduction

The dual substance of Christ—the yearning, so human, so superhuman, of man to attain God, or more exactly, to return to God and identify himself with him—has always been a deep inscrutable mystery…the struggle between God and man breaks out in everyone, together with the longing for reconciliation…That part of Christ's nature which was profoundly human helps us to understand him and love him and pursue his Passion as it were our own. If he had not been able to touch our hearts with such assurance and tenderness; he would not be able to become a model for our lives. We struggle, we see him struggle also, and we find strength. We see that we are not alone in the world.

Nikos Kazantzakis, "The Last Temptation of Christ"

Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.

Alasdair McIntyre, "After Virtue"

In chapter twenty-one of Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon discusses the Christian theological controversies of the early fourth century that concerned the nature and extent of Jesus' divinity, as well as the relational status of Jesus the Son to God the Father. Gibbon sarcastically concluded that the whole affair was a furious contest over a diphthong, by which he meant the conceptual distinction—as it pertained to the relational status of Jesus the Son to God the Father—between *homoousios* (of the same substance) rather than *hom**oi**ousios* (of similar substance). Thus, the difference between heresy and emergent orthodoxy as Gibbon quipped was literally a matter of "one iota." Though Gibbon's tone throughout his historical survey can be read as one of contempt for Christianity, his witticism points to the crucial political, agonistic function of language and, by extension—I will argue—of rhetoric in matters of theological contest, such as the Arian controversy and its subsequent creed, situated in the context of fourth century Alexandria, which shall be the primary concern of the foregoing thesis.

As a segue into the theological controversy that emerged in Alexandria, let's consider an analogy more contemporary than the religious controversy discussed by Gibbon of nearly seventeen hundred years ago, but likewise speaks to the political and agonistic function of language (as well as implicit assumption made about language): The Constitution of the United States. The Constitution is often understood to reflect or contain self-evident truths—truths that are, therefore, ahistorical, asocial and, as such, context-independent. Those who hold to this view of the Constitution are referred to as "originalists," "literalists," or "strict-constructivists," while those who view the Constitution more flexibly, as an "evolving" document, are variously called "Non-originalists" or "pragmatists."[1] For the originalist, the Constitution is, in a way similar to the Bible, a document of ultimate authority wherein meaning is ultimately fixed and unambiguous; this view stands in stark contrast to the pragmatist's view that meaning is a socially constructed product of dialogue or of the interplay between power and desire. For the pragmatist, meaning is always provisional and in flux; "objectivity" itself is a cultural category, the product of social convention. This distinction between the literal, plain meaning of words versus a more metaphorical, fluid understanding of language that drives the different interpretive methods relative to how we understand the Constitution, as well as the politics that stem from these rival interpretive presuppositions, analogously illustrates the same tensions that were in play in the debate within the early church concerning how to construe the relationship between Jesus the Son of God and God the Father. In short, the way we talk about the Constitution and the way we talk (and have talked) about theology speaks to the perennial politics of language.

[1] For a fuller treatment of biblical literalism in America see Crapanzano, 2000.

At the heart of what has historically come to be known as the Arian controversy[2] is a debate over the nature of Jesus Christ and his divine status: Is Jesus (the Son) a creaturely being set apart from God (the Father), and in this sense, one of the three hypostases of the trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)? Or is the Son consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father, and thus a distinct being, but of the same substance as God? Conceiving of the Son in terms of the concept of *homoousios* is analogous to thinking about the way in which ice, though a distinct form of water, still remains essentially and substantially water, or how the initial spark of fire that starts another distinct fire is still of the same substance as the first fire from whence it came. Jesus' role as both model and savior was the key factor at play in the Arian controversy, for if Jesus was understood to be wholly God then he could hardly have served as a model whom we finite beings, who are clearly not God, could emulate. However, if he was construed as fully human, then how could he serve the theological-metaphysical, salvific function of rescuing the immortal soul from damnation? Another key aspect of the controversy concerned whether Christ existed from all eternity or was he created in "in time"? The Arians had a theological solution to this particular religious conundrum, but one that ran counter to emergent orthodox opinion, and given that the stakes were—from the point of view of the Christian leaders and Christian theology—the very life and death of both body and soul, it was a serious matter indeed.

In 324 of the Common Era Constantine, who was then Augustus of the West,[3] finally defeated his chief rival, Licinius, Augustus of the East, at two decisive battles in

[2] For an excellent overview of the vast literature related to Arianism beginning from the late nineteenth century see Williams, 2001.

[3] The emperor Diocletian who reigned from 284-305 (in whose court Constantine initially served) established the tetrarchic system whereby there would be two emperors (Augusti) in east and west, and two

Asia Minor. This victory enabled Constantine to declare control over the entire Roman Empire—East and West—thus he became Rome's sole emperor, and the first Christian emperor of history. Along with this victory in the East, Constantine inherited a theological debate that was unique to the important eastern port city of Alexandria—one which threatened to splinter the church in this half of the empire—a splintering that could disrupt the unity sought by the empire's new ruler after a time of military conflict and social unrest. Constantine perceived a potential threat to peace and intervened in his role as emperor to instigate some measure of stability within this theological controversy that was spreading throughout Alexandria, the wealthiest and most influential city in the eastern portion of his new kingdom. He did so by inaugurating the first "Ecumenical Council" to be held in the city of Nicaea (present day Turkey) in June of 325. Though the council was concerned with other matters within the church and its relation to empire, one of its chief goals was to establish some measure of doctrinal unity regarding the question of Jesus' divinity. Not insignificantly, the Council of Nicaea was—at that point—the largest gathering of Christian leaders in Church history.

The religious and political significance of this gathering cannot be overestimated, given that it was the first time that Christian leaders, after decades of persecution and marginalization, were able to ally themselves with real political power in the form of the emperor who solicited Christian thought. Because of this new possibility for the imperial sanctioning of particular doctrine, the theological became inextricably entangled in new ways with the political. The Arian debate in its particular form, circa 325, had been

Caesars who would succeed them, thus providing a system of succession to minimize civil strife and political competition. This is a system that Constantine would overturn after his triumph over the East in 324 (see Cameron, 2006).

percolating within the Alexandrian church since 318,[4] and the chief proponent of the theological view that insisted on the necessity of the creatureliness of Jesus issued from the mouth of the popular Alexandrian presbyter, Arius.[5] Arius' view was in direct conflict with his bishop, Alexander, of the Alexandrian church, and as a result of the controversy surrounding the Christological question concerning the nature of Jesus Christ, Arius would go down in Christian history as the arch-heretic of Christian thought.

In a concerted effort to hammer out doctrine specifically related to this fractious controversy within the Eastern Church, 318 bishops gathered at Nicaea to debate how to properly conceive the Trinitarian relation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The primary focus of the debate concerned the nature and divinity of Jesus Christ (the Son), and his relation to God (the Father). The eventual, if ultimately tentative resolution to this theological debate came in the form of a religious creed—The Nicene Creed—significant because a version of the creed is still recited as part of the liturgy in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches alike to this day.

The principal characters in this dramatic church controversy were, again, Arius (the namesake of this controversy, his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, and later Alexander's successor, Athanasius of Alexandria). Arius, in an effort to maintain an

[4] In 318 C.E. Arius had already been excommunicated by Bishop Alexander at the synod of Alexandria, but sought refuge with Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was sympathetic to the Arian cause. By the time of Nicaea, this church controversy would become more politically relevant as Constantine sought religious unity within his empire (see McEnhill and Newland, 2004).

[5] Richard Rubenstein (*When Jesus Became God* 53) writes "in one sense the controversy was an old one. Alexandria has long been a hotbed of theological innovation and debate—a place where outstanding Christian thinkers defended and explicated their faith using methods derived from Greek philosophy as well as from Jewish and Christian sources. A subject that much concerned its most creative and disputatious minds was the relationship of the Son, Jesus Christ, to God the Father—an issue still unsettled in the Christian community as a whole. A century earlier Origen of Alexandria, the greatest theologian of his time, had caused an enormous stir by declaring the while the Son was eternal like the Father and united with Him, he was separate from and less than God."

absolute monotheism which preserved not only the complete unity of God, but also God's radical alterity, conceptually set God absolutely apart from the created order and all that was subsequently dependent upon God, which included Jesus the *created* Son of God. Arius contended that Jesus (the Son) was of a nature qualitatively different from God (the Father). From the point of view of Bishop Alexander, this was a heretical theology, insofar as splitting the unity of the Father and Son diminished the divinity of the Son, and by extension compromised the possibility for salvation, or to put in more direct theological terminology, it was a matter of *soteriology*. The stakes in this debate were high both politically and theologically. Politically, Constantine needed to rein in this controversy in order to prevent the kind of cultural schism in the East that could potentially destabilize his newfound control over the region, and theologically—specifically in terms of soteriology—the salvific notion of a substitutionary atonement was dependent upon the full divinity of the Son.

The Council of Nicaea represented a unique moment in Christian history because it was here the church and state joined for the first time in the formation of an "official theology." The Christian church went from being a persecuted cult movement within the Roman Empire to the privileged religion—a religious movement now backed by the power and authority of the emperor. Christian doctrine was now in a position to be enabled and sanctioned by the state, and likewise enforced by imperial power[6] in a way

[6] All of those who did not agree with the orthodox conclusions regarding the initial matters of Christology that were reached at the Council of Nicaea, chiefly via the mechanism of the Nicene Creed, were given the option to consent by way of their signature on the document, or be exiled. Several key bishops who had previously supported Arius in important ways, namely Eusebius of Caesarea and Eusebius of Nicomedia, bowed to the will of Constantine and signed the creed in a perceived act of betrayal by the Arians. Arius and his followers—two Libyan bishops and a few priests—were ultimately exiled as they refused to amend their theological position in accordance with the soon to be Orthodox position (see Rubenstein, chapter 4); for a more scholarly treatment, see Barnes, 1981; 1988.

heretofore unimagined by the church. Suddenly, the Christian church for the first time in history had a mechanism for officially legitimating certain theological forms of knowledge over against others types of knowledge, and Arius and his followers henceforth came to be seen as the arch-heretics of Christian thought placed in a position over and against the formation of an emergent orthodoxy. Rowan Williams in his monograph *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (2001) put it succinctly, writing that:

> Arianism has often been regarded as the archetypal Christian deviation, something aimed at the very heart of the Christian confession. From the point of view of history, this is hardly surprising: the crisis of the fourth century was the most dramatic internal struggle the Christian church had so far experienced; it generated the first creedal statement to claim universal, unconditional assent, and it became inextricably entangled with issues concerning the authority of political rulers in the affairs of the Church…by the time the great upheavals within the empire were over, Ariansim has been irrevocably cast as the Other in relation to Catholic (and civilized) religion (1).

Williams nicely elucidates the importance of this theological controversy for the history of Christian thought, noting the political implications and how Arius' theology, via the mechanism of the first universally recognized creedal statement, was cast as *Other* through the failure of its adherents to gain assent at the Council of Nicaea. It is no small matter that Constantine the Great, solicited the famous Council of Nicaea and backed its theological (creedal) formulations with imperial power. Given the historical importance of this first intersection between the Christian church and the Roman state, this creed

served not only an important theological function, but also an institutional, regulative, and disciplinary purpose as well. In this sense the creed can be read as a kind of existential technology in the Foucauldian sense – a technology of self. What remains to be shown is how the multi-purposed creed produced and continues to produce its effects through various rhetorical means. George Kennedy in his *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* explained that "The place of rhetoric and dialectic was an important theme in the Arian Controversy" (196), and Kennedy further noted the rhetorical significance and interest of the Council of Nicaea for historians of rhetoric (197-206) in terms of several main points:

1) The Council demonstrates the tension between the tradition of simple, radical Christianity, unaffected by worldly philosophy, and the emerging tradition of Christian use of dialectic and classical philosophy.

2) The formal sessions of the Council apparently did not include a fair presentation of Arius' views, although there was some argument about those views…at Nicaea the judicial functions, in the view of Constantine and most of the bishops, were, however subordinate to its deliberative functions.

3) The Council of Nicaea illustrates the importance of external rhetoric in the late empire. Ceremony in this case mitigated opposition and the expression of divergent points of view: it operated as an external rhetoric.

4) One of the primary tasks of the Council was finding the right words which would describe the Son.

5) The basis of theological disputation at the Council of Nicaea and subsequently was a combination of scriptural authority and the tradition of the Church.

Kennedy's analysis of the rhetorical function of the Council of Nicaea illustrates some of the key aspects to be pursued in this study concerning how council and creed alike served as an "external rhetoric" designed to quell theological controversy and stabilize religious (Christian) knowledge, in the form of a new emergent orthodoxy, over against alternative ways of theological knowing. While Kennedy's analysis of both this period and the

specific theological debate is important, it is equally necessary to review some of the more recent scholarship in this area. With respect to the study of the intersection between rhetoric and religion, this is a field that has produced several important works that model and develop the insights of Kennedy outlined above in important and interesting ways. Some of these studies focus broadly on the role of creeds and councils in late antiquity, which include the classic study by J.N.D. Kelley, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd ed., 1972), but more recently L.H. Westra's work on the Apostle's Creed (2002), and the anthology *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils from 400-700* (2009), as well as *The Oecumencial Councils: From Nicea I (325) to Nicea II (787)* (2007). Still, other texts emphasize the particular rhetorical methods and tactics used in the socio-religious context of the late antique world.

Some important and recent studies that address the social and historical matrix of the late antique world, and the role of rhetoric within this religious matrix, include Michael Duncan's essay "The New Christian Rhetoric of Origen," which argues that Origen's *Contra Celsum* is an underexplored example of early Christian rhetoric that predates Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* in its attempt to speak to the practical problems facing third century Christians, specifically in terms of the conversion of mixed audiences, the utility of pagan rhetoric and the preservation of the emerging canonicity of the New Testament with its attendant divine proofs. Several key works by Vernon Robbins also speak to the intersection of religious discourse and cultural forces, while extending George Kennedy's earlier study of Christian rhetoric (see "Rhetography,"2008) in the New Testament. Most importantly, Robbins' *Invention of Christian Discourse* (2009) offers an extensive and wide ranging socio-rhetorical

interpretation/method for understanding and analyzing ancient texts based on both the conscious and unconscious rhetorical devices that are deployed in these texts, and his analysis of the Precreation discourse used in the Nicene Creed (2012) is of particular interest.

Craig Smith's *Rhetoric and Human Consciousness: A History*, as well as *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity* (Puertas,2013), and *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities: Studies in Christianity and Judaism* (Brauu, 2005) are each useful historical compendiums for studying the link between rhetoric and religion in the formation of both self and world, while Carlos Galvao-Sobrinho in his *Doctrine and Power: Theological Controversy and Christian Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (2013) explores the intersection between episcopal authority and theological dispute. *Doctrine and Power* is an important work for several reasons: the way it examines the disputes that existed prior to and following the Arian controversy, its reconstruction of the Arian conflict, including speculation about how Arius' ideas may have spread within Alexandria, and in its analysis of the role of both Constantine and the Nicene Creed in the aftermath of the decisions rendered at Nicaea.

Lastly, other works explore more broadly the function of rhetoric and religion, in both its Christian and pagan forms, within the context of late antiquity (Pernot, 2006; Puertas, 2013), and, while this is an earlier study (1987), Thomas Farrell in his essay concerning "Early Christian Creeds in Light of the Orality-Literacy Hypothesis" applied the insights of Walter Ong and Eric Havelock and the Orality-Literacy theory each developed to the study of the formulary and concrete expressions characteristic of early Christian creeds. These various studies speak to the diversity of approaches applied to

the study of rhetoric and religion, as well as to the abundant source material that is available to scholars in the field. This study attempts to situate itself within this ongoing dialogue concerning the social, regulative, and existential-technological function of religious creeds.

Modern theories of rhetoric are concerned with studying the foundations of knowledge and ideology in discourse *(The Rhetorical Tradition*, 1202), and so this project deliberately crosses disciplinary lines in order to demonstrate one way in which rhetoric serves historical investigation, critical analysis and theoretical speculation (1202), and also speaks to epistemological questions concerning how we know, how we act, and how we are acted upon by, within, and through discourse. This study deploys a theoretical matrix that incorporates contemporary rhetorical theory, religious studies, philosophy, and writings in the sociology of knowledge in the service of a generative rhetorical criticism focused on exploring the relation between language, knowledge, and power that is particularly situated within the emergent institutional context of the early church. The key questions that inform this analysis are:

1. How does the study of the emerging institutionalization of the Church in the wake of Constantine and the ensuing Arian controversy illustrate an example of ideological legitimation informed by rhetorical means?

2. What roles does metaphor play in the construction of notions of divinity?

3. How do religious creeds, seen as "technologies of self" regulate bodies and identities?

4. What are the limits of language with regard to the religious metaphysics typified by the Arian controversy?

Rhetoric, again, conceived in terms of studying the relation between ideology and knowledge in discourse, played a clear and crucial role in both the construction, and

cultural mediation of a particular notion of divinity (over against alternative conceptions). This dynamic is paradigmatically represented in the example of the Arian controversy, viewed as a unique moment in the Christian tradition of the expression of God the Father in relation to Jesus the Son in technically specific terms that were ultimately stamped with imperial approval. Paying attention to the way language was used in this ancient theological debate may teach us something further about how rhetorical theory can serve to help deconstruct the articulation of words and things in the construction and mediation of notions of the divine both culturally and existentially. This conflict also servers to remind us that language is always, already political.

Maurice Wiles in his 1962 essay "In Defense of Arius" wrote that "when I first read H.M. Gwatkin's summary of Arianism as a 'mass of presumptuous theorizing…a lifeless system of unspiritual pride and hard unlovingness,' I felt that there was more to be said on behalf of Arius than is usually admitted. Yet Arius remains the only one of the great heresiarchs who has received no significant measure of rehabilitation" (339). Wiles' essay is an important representation of an early attempt to recover the value of Arius' theology, or at least begin defending Arius over and against the charge of heresy, showing that Arius attempted to develop a serious, legitimate theological position within the early church—a viable alternative to emergent Christian orthodoxy. These questions, each concerned with some aspect of language/knowledge or identity/power will constitute the primary focus of this study, and will be brought to bear on the primary literature—letters, theological statements, and the Nicene Creed itself, as each are related to the Arian controversy and the genesis of the institutional Church and emergent Christian orthodoxy circa the fourth century. To recap, both the Council of Nicaea and

the Nicene Creed can be read as a form of disciplined discourse within the context of the church as an emerging institution—Council and Creed alike, in this sense, functioned as control mechanisms that sought to legitimate certain forms of knowledge and behavior. Looked at this way, the Nicene Creed can to be understood, critically (in Foucauldian terms) as a technology of self and society – the creed functioned to regulate bodies as much as it provided a rhetorical model for a specific form of existential confession, and continues to do so today. The creed was and is inescapably ideological, and the initial formulation of its theological precepts supplied something both social and existential; it was developed simultaneously both as a technological tool—a form of disciplined discourse—for control through communication-as-confession, and a vehicle for religious identity. In this latter sense, the Nicene Creed carved out a discursive space that allowed for the creation of a particular set of subject positions within the church laity, as well as between the laity and church leaders.

In this opening chapter I have laid the groundwork, outlining the essential rationale, for this rhetorical study of religious creeds, but also articulated the range of essential questions that will inform the forthcoming analysis, and I have referred to the key developing scholarship in this area. I have also provided a schematic on the historical background of the Arian controversy that comprises the context for the case-study approach with which this dissertation is primarily concerned.

Chapter II outlines the specific rhetorical/cultural methodology deployed in this dissertation and the purpose for which it was designed, with a specific focus on the linguistic theories/philosophies of language articulated by the French Post-moderns: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean François Lyotard, and Michel de Certeau, who

figure prominently, along with Emile Durkheim's sociological study of religion, and writings from the field of Late Antique Christian Studies.

Chapter III provides an extensive analysis of the historical and conceptual outworking of the notion of the *logos* as it came to be used in the Christian tradition. This chapter focuses on key primary and secondary literature related to Arius, his theology, and the broader Arian controversy. The purpose here is to provide a contextual canvas that details the intellectual background which shaped and informed the rhetorical/theological nexus that influenced the religious, specifically Christological and Trinitarian formulations, of Arius, Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, and Athanasius of Alexandria. This chapter discusses the antecedents to Arianism—the influence of the *logos theology* of Philo of Alexandria, the second-century Greek Apologists, as well as the influence of Clement and Origen of Alexandria. The scant writings of Arius, primarily his letters to various bishops of the Eastern church entangled in this debate, as well as the fragments we have from his main theological work, the *Thalia (Banquet)* will likewise be discussed, along with key writings by Athanasius of Alexandria, to include his *De Incarnatione* and Book 1 of his *Orations Against the Arians*, and the initial iteration of the Nicene Creed itself. In addition, key essays and monographs in the field of Late Antique Christian studies that span last 30 years, include Rowan Williams' *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh's *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*, and Richard Hanson's *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, all of which are focused on revaluating both the figure of Arius and Arianism more widely, will be considered.

Chapter IV offers an extended rhetorical analysis and discussion of the theological positions outlined in previous chapter, with a focus on the role of metaphor and ideology in the debate. Rhetorical and critical theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Kenneth Burke, and Michel de Certeau, as cited above, will be deployed to provide the rhetorical and analytic frame through which to view the competing notions of divinity operative in the Arian controversy. This chapter also attends to the role of the figurative in Origen's theory of scriptural exegesis, paying attention to issues of language, knowledge, and the rhetorical function of metaphor in the construal of the theological relation between God the Father and Jesus the Son. Likewise, the Nicene Creed itself is analyzed for its rhetorical, ideological effects—the disciplining of discourse related to the technology of self, and the privileging of particular forms of knowing.

Chapter V provides a schematic outline of how, through the various institutional and administrative mechanisms of the Roman Empire, the Nicene Creed came to serve a regulative function within the emerging institutionalization of the Christian church, and how church structure mimicked broader Roman administrative structures.

Chapter VI provides a summing up of the dissertation and concluding remarks about possible avenues of future scholarship for studying the intersection between rhetoric and religion. Building upon, but expanding the material analyzed in the previous chapters, I argue that rhetorically analyzing the specific religious creed generated out of the Arian conflict offers a novel artifact for understanding a form of disciplined discourse in pre-modern, early institutional contexts, and one that can be expanded and developed by rhetoricians, philosophers, and theologians. Religious creeds serve not only a theological purpose, but equally and more practically, a regulative purpose within the

context of the then emergent institutionalization of the Church under Emperor Constantine. Religious creeds, such as the one formulated at Nicaea are, in the wake of the decisions rendered by this state sponsored council, inextricably bound with imperial, and ecclesiastical politics. In this sense, the Nicene Creeds is to be understood as a form of control through communication — a disciplined discourse that serves as an instrument of power within the church, but simultaneously aids in the existential disciplining of the laity through a specific mechanism of confession, and the two are not mutually exclusive.

Chapter II

History, Culture, Rhetoric: Notes on Methodology

Culture, Rhetoric, History – An Interdisciplinary Method:

The theoretical model to be used in this study is a series of lenses: *Historical/Cultural*, *Rhetorical/Theoretical*, and *Religious/Theological*, designed to create a matrix wherein the cultural, the historical and the rhetorical interpenetrate. The important and influential historical writings of modern historians of Late Antique Christian studies, Timothy Barnes (*Constantine and Eusebius*; *Athanasius and Constantius)*, Peter Brown (*Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*), and Rowan Williams (*Arius: Heresy and Tradition*), will provide the primary framework for situating the Arian controversy and the theological minutia germane to the debate within the broader cultural context of late antiquity, exploring this cultural terrain in both pre and post-Constantinian terms (both politically and theologically). Likewise, the writings of fourth and fifth century ecclesiastical historians, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates Scholasticus, and Sozomenus, along with the more polemical and apologetic works of Athanasius of Alexandria (most of this work is collected in Opitz) are of particular importance, as each diverse source helps to illuminate the proceedings at the Council of Nicaea – even if at a reconstructed distance. Eusebius' *De Vita Constantini* (*Life of Constantine*), is one of the exceptions, however, as Eusebius was present at the Council of Nicaea, thus making this a most important document for establishing some of the details of the proceedings at the Council, for which (apart from the descriptions of the above mentioned historians) there is otherwise very little in terms of a written record. It is

not until the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431 that we have any *acta*, or minutes of council proceedings (Kennedy 200).

Elizabeth Clark's *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (2004) provides a practical overview of a theoretically informed, inter-disciplinary way to approach the writing of history in the wake of the linguistic turn in philosophy, and critical theory. She writes:

> I hope to convince historians that partisans of theory need not be branded disciplinary insurrectionists; rather, they raise in a new guise issues of long-standing intellectual discussion. More particularly, I wish to persuade scholars of Western pre-modernity (and especially those of ancient Christianity) that the texts they study are highly amenable to the types of literary/philosophical/theoretical critique that have excited—and indeed, have transformed—other humanities disciplines under the rubric of post-structuralism (Preface).

Clark is critical of attempts to write an objective, realistic history, since such a view is predicated on the now defunct notion that there is a correspondence between the empirical past and the past as represented by the historian in his or her work. History, inflected by post-structuralism, is no longer seen as "out there," but rather it is something historians create, and in that sense historiography is a highly rhetorical enterprise.

In Chapter 8 of her study Clark provides some examples of how pre-modern texts can be analyzed in terms of ideological critique (Michel Foucault) and the representation of early Christian women, or postcolonial theory (Edward Said) as a way to explore the notion of empire. Finally, Clark points to Averil Cameron's *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* (1990) as representative of this new approach to the writing of history, noting

how Cameron's study "brilliantly illustrates how issues of rhetoric, power, and genre are intertwined in early Christian discourse, and in this respect her work represents the successful deployment of Foucauldian themes for a study of late ancient Christianity" (169). Indeed, Cameron's concern with the various modes of Christian expression and the conditions necessary for their possibility, is instrumental in this sense, and offers an excellent model that this study will attempt to follow in a modified form, applying a critical/rhetorical theory which appropriates the writings of a strand of key French theorists – Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel de Certeau—in the study of the Nicene Creed, and the attendant documents that informed the particular creedal expression of Jesus' divinity. Each of these theorists is important to this study because of the various emphases placed on the role of language in their work. The writings of both Clark and Cameron represent an important critical component in my cultural/historical methodology, pointing to ways for engaging the texts of Late Antique Christian studies in the idiom of more postmodern form of rhetorical criticism.

Rhetorical/Theoretical Frame (Foucault and Derrida)

The Archeology of Knowledge is Foucault's most extensive exposition of his theory of discourse, and one that systematically attempts to describe a strictly material relationship between thought and knowledge; consider some of Foucault's remarks from the *Archeology of Knowledge*. At the outset, he questions the methods of traditional historiography, writing that:

> The old question of traditional analysis (What link should be made between disparate events? How can causal succession be established between them? What continuity or overall significance do they possess? Is it possible to define a totality, or must one be content with reconstituting connexions?) are now being

> replaced by questions of another type: which strata should be isolated from others? What types of series should be established…What system of relations (hierarchy, dominance, stratification, univocal determinations, circular causality) may be established between them…the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer of lasting foundations, but one of transformations, that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations (3-5).

Foucault is here challenging the idea of a stable history that can be recaptured in language by the historian or theorist. His method instead focuses upon disruption and discontinuity, rather than continuity or teleology in the study of history. The other important point to notice is the emphasis upon studying the "system of relations" that obtains between historical objects and how a historical object is constituted, which is at the forefront of the method outlined in the *Archeology*.

For Foucault, objects don't have an intrinsic meaning, rather the knowledge of an object, what constitutes an object emerges out of discourse, such that Foucault writes, "it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, or to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground…the object does not wait in limbo in order that we free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not pre-exist itself" (44). Thus, an object only obtains meaning through its being situated in a system of relations. It possesses no intrinsic meaning apart from this discursive matrix. Knowledge is thus not the product of direct observation, but is created, "through relations between institutions, economic, and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization;

and these relations are not present in the object itself" (44). This leads to Foucault's notion of *discursive formations* which refers to this aggregation of forces that conditions meaning. Some scholars, such as Bruce Herzberg in his essay "Michel Foucault's Rhetorical Theory" argue that, though Foucault avoids talking about rhetoric, preferring discourse instead, his theory does address some of the central concerns of modern rhetorical theory: namely a view that understands rhetoric as epistemic, insofar as it places an emphasis upon the social, and highlights and expands the notion of context (77). It is this aspect of Foucault's "archeological" method that is useful for my study—using Foucault for analyzing the discursive formations that conditioned the events leading up to and culminating at the Council of Nicaea. These events, in turn, allowed for the possibility of a particular construction of the concept of Jesus' divinity.

Foucault's *The Order of Things* is also important for this study. There he writes that "what I would like to do, however, is to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist yet is part of the scientific order" (xi); and later, "between the already 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge there is a middle region which liberates order itself" (xxi). *The Order of Things* is a radical work, largely devoted to uncovering this region (a space for disruption) between the "encoded" eye—the self and its epistemology, or way of knowing— that is always-already socially mediated and unconsciously conditioned by the various conventions and mechanisms of culture, so much so that these conventional ways of knowing that constitute reality, so called, are understood to be given. It is this *givenness* of the social order—its reification over time—that Foucault problematizes in his archeological analysis of the origin of the modern sciences. In the *Order of Things*, Foucault's goal is to make visible the

contingent, constructed, and, therefore, provisional cultural order that we take for granted, indeed showing that other possible, perhaps even better social arrangements and ways of knowing are possible (xx). Foucault is critical of the representational/correspondence theory of knowledge discussed above, and one of its principal critics. Foucault describes the representational model of knowledge this way:

> Up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The Universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man. Painting imitated space. And representation—whether in the service of pleasure or knowledge—was posited as a form of repetition: the theater of life or the mirror of nature that was the claim made by all language… (17).

Foucault is here trying to provide an account of the culturally contingent and specific way in which our epistemologies are shaped and historically informed, as well as how they shift. The irony is that, with respect to epistemological correspondence or ways of knowing, religious believers and scientists are actually closer in terms of *how* they know, though quite different in terms of *what* they know—both agree that the world is *found* and not *made*.

It is worth considering the theological implications of some of Foucault's statements: For example, Foucault writes, "there is no difference between the visible

marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition" (32); or consider this remark: "In an episteme in which signs and similitudes were wrapped around one another in an endless spiral it was essential that the relation of microcosm to macrocosm should be conceived as both the guarantee of that knowledge and the limit of its expansion" (31). Taken together, these statements by Foucault demonstrate how the idea of the "Great Chain of Being" was operative in the sixteenth century. Arguably, this idea of resemblances extends back further than that to the writings of Aristotle and the later appropriation of his categories of thought in the development of systematic metaphysical theology. Within the context of this metaphysical idea of the "great chain of being," to which Foucault devotes considerable attention, metaphysics is inherently onto-theologic. More clearly, as Joan Stambaugh puts it in her introduction to Heidegger's on *Identity and Difference*: "Metaphysics is ontology in that it thinks Being as the first and most universal ground common to all beings. Metaphysics is theology in that it thinks Being as the highest ground above all beings, ultimately as the ground itself, *causa sui*, which is the metaphysical concept of God. Metaphysics is thus in its very nature onto-theologic" (Introduction). The question that Heidegger asks in his essay on "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics" is: Do our Western languages have an intrinsic metaphysical structure so that they are forever destined to be onto-theo-logical in their nature or do they harbor other possibilities of thinking? This link between Heidegger and Foucault, and the possibility of other ways of knowing is of value here, given that Foucault's discussion of language in *The Order of Things* has implications for studying

the relationship between religion and culture, which can be applied more directly to the construction of meaning and the ideological function of the Council of Nicaea, especially since the intersection of church-state politics became possible due to the rise of Constantine and the way he privileged the Christian religious mode of expression.

While Foucault's emphasis is upon discursive formations and systems of relations that condition meaning, the writings of Jacques Derrida are also important, insofar as the focus in Derrida is more directed at the *logocentric* tendencies that conceive meaning in terms of the *metaphysics of presence*—and there is indeed a kind of "metaphysics of presence" at work in the language of the Nicene Creed which Derrida's theories on language and writing illuminate. In his *Of Grammatology*, Derrida provides a way of critiquing a "metaphysics of presence," predicated upon a view of language that attempts to extend itself past language to the reality it names (see introduction) Important in this critique by Derrida is the way he gives priority to writing over speaking. While both Derrida and Foucault are critical of representational theories of truth and meaning, their critiques manifest in different ways. Derrida seeks to subvert the *logocentrism* that characterizes Western metaphysics and the notion of 'truth' as self-presence that has grown out of that tradition; Derrida understands this "metaphysics of presence" to be essentially a failure to understand the inherent indeterminacy of language, and his discussion of the 'supplement' is a cornerstone of his larger critique of *logocentrism*. The supplement is that which always already stands in for something else, but it is never (nor can it be) the thing itself, to which we have no immediate access, or as Derrida notoriously put it:

> …if reading must not be content with doubling the text, it cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, towards a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psycho-biographical, etc.) or towards a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, outside of writing in general….as regards the absence of the referent or the transcendental signified. *There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors texte*]….there has never been anything but writing; there has never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references…(*Grammatology*, 158).

There can be no final meaning because there is no direct or final correspondence between the sign and the signified, thus language (writing) constantly defers meaning to the extent that meaning can only be produced by/within the play of semantic differences that comprise a given semiotic system. Therefore, Derrida's neologism—*différance*—refers to both these necessary semantic differences (the non-identical) and the deferral (of any final meaning) that language/writing constantly enacts. Writing, as Christopher Norris put it in his study of Deconstruction, "is the example *par excellence* of a supplement which enters into the heart of all intelligible discourse and comes to define its very nature and condition" (Norris, 33). Writing by its very linguistic nature—its "linguisticality"—can never produce the closure that a *logocentric* (the word made present) metaphysics seeks. A text in this sense, insofar as it is a product of language, can never manifest full presence; put another way, there can be no closure, no final authoritative reading of a text. It is important also to note the distinction between the "a" and the "e" in

différence/*différance* as this represents an attempt by Derrida to demonstrate how writing precedes speech (not historically, but conceptually). Here there is a difference at the graphic level, but not at the phonetic level, thus illustrating a slippage between language and what it attempts to represent. Both Foucault and Derrida seek to point out that our knowledge of "reality" is always mediated through language and this has important theological implications, for the kind of metaphysical speculation on the nature of the "reality" of the divinity of the Son that occurred at the Council of Nicaea.

Rhetorical/Theoretical Frame (Lyotard and de Certeau)

Foucault and Derrida are not alone in challenging a representational view of language, Jean François Lyotard, and Michel de Certeau each mounts his own unique challenge to a representational theory of language. Lyotard and de Certeau each contend for the constructed "nature" of what we call reality, but they point to the always-already political aspects of these constructions, the importance of narrative, and the role of the marginalized. Lyotard and de Certeau point to the ways in which the local disrupts the universal, and how that disruption seeks to subvert the stranglehold of a hegemonic master narrative—whether that is a narrative concerning God, the universality of reason, science, or a technologically inspired concept of progress. While their theories are very much informed by modernity, their emphasis upon the way in which minority perspectives are sidelined when they don't comply with the dominant narrative of a community has immediate bearing upon a critical reading of the situation at Nicaea where the emergent orthodox and heterodox were in conflict. It should be noted, however, that, though Arianism was marginalized, it did not emerge from a marginalized context. It is metaphor that introduced the problem. That said, the writings of de Certeau

and Lyotard are inherently political in their respective attempts to bring marginalized forms of knowledge to the fore through their emphasis upon the relation between narratives and knowing—and an emphasis which seeks to raise awareness regarding the constructed nature of identity and culture, and its mediating concepts. By foregrounding and calling attention to the processes of reification—the reification of social reality or the reification of divinity—as Lyotard and de Certeau do, each provides the condition(s) for the possibility of resistance, and it is in this way that these works are important for theorizing about the political, or as de Certeau has it:

> The presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators, and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tell us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization (xiii)

The notion of representations referred to here by de Certeau is the term that designates a given reality—a reality produced by the consensus building referred to by Lyotard as that which provides the reality with its perceived legitimacy. However, as de Certeau points out, beneath the surface of the "real," lies another thriving counter-reality, and with it comes a kind of counter-knowledge—in this case the knowledge of the users who did not have a say in the initial act of legitimation itself, but who must nonetheless abide by the rules of the social configuration sanctioned by the powerful.

We can think of science (theology as the science of God) in the context of the events at Nicaea as "technological" information pertaining to the relation between God the Father and God the Son. This theo-scientific knowledge is mediated through the tool

of the religious creed—it is technical knowledge concerning divinity. Science and religion often contend that the world is found and not made, both assume that language is the conduit by which information about reality can be clearly represented and clearly communicated (a transmission mode of communication) to the receiver. Through this clear transmission of information consensus can be built and knowledge legitimated in the service of improved social ends—cultural unity in the case of Constantine.[7] Further, and theologically speaking, a divine, universal *telos* can be used to ideologically justify one way of conceiving the divine (or the role of the divine in history) over another. In the context of this study, we can apply this to the rhetorical interrogation of the science of God (theology) for which there is a *telos,* and religious creeds are the forms of technology which circumscribe how *telos* is to be conceived. Lyotard asks "can we today continue to organize the mass of events coming from the human and nonhuman world by referring them to the idea of a universal history of humanity?" Lyotard ask this question because he doubts that all narratives can be reduced into one master, or meta-narrative without violence being done to someone or some group, thus he defines the Postmodern, notoriously, as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (*The Postmodern Condition,* xxiv), and he elaborates on this point by writing further, against the notion of consensus associated with legitimation "such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games. An invention is always born of dissension. Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to difference and reinforces

[7] This intersection between theology and politics in late antiquity is obviously more complicated that can be fully outlined here, but there were many emperors that followed in the wake of Constantine (306-337), including his three sons, Constans (337-350) Constantinus (337-340), and Constantius (337-361). In 337 Constantine divided the empire into three parts and over time these Emperors variously advocated for either the pro-Nicene theological positions (Constans) or the Arian positions (Constantius); later the Emperor Valens (364-378) would also be pro-Arian, and the Emperor Theodosius (379-395) in 381 would, finally, outlaw Arianism.

our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (*The Postmodern Condition,* xxv). For Lyotard our concept of reality is tied to our narratives—the stories we tell ourselves—and thus to language, for "politics always rests on the way one phrase, the present phrase, is linked to another phrase…from the different phrases that are actually possible, one will be actualized, and the actual question is which one?" (*The Postmodern Explained,* 31). So, the problem with the attempt toward a legitimating consensus is that it tends to authorize narratives that reduce difference to the same for the purpose of, say, expediency or other pragmatic ends—that is, language is always political because certain phrases, thus forms of knowledge, are actualized, while others are not.

For Lyotard language always lacks innocence, thus his theories of language further help to illuminate the political aspects over the debate of Jesus' divinity at Nicaea. Particularly important in this respect is Lyotard's notion of the *différend*. The specific language of the Nicene Creed does something, namely, it affirms salvific knowledge through a particular form of phrasing, and this constitutes a regime of knowledge. However, it is only one possible arrangement of knowledge as the Arian form still persists (though it must continue to struggle for legitimation) despite its having been excised from the dominant church narrative.[8] Lyotard defines a *différend* as "case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments--one side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy" (*The Différend* xi). The Arian controversy constitutes a

[8] It is important to note that what I contend here is a *retrospective* view, as the "Arian" and emergent orthodox theologies were frequently repositioned between 325 and 381 through the waxing and waning of the emperors that succeeded Constantine, as well as the placement of pro-Nicene (Athanasius of Alexander and Marcellus of Ancyra) and pro-Arian (George of Cappadocia/Alexandria, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Ufilia – the Arian bishop of the Visigoths) bishops.

différend par excellence in that the outcome of this conflict did not de-legitimate Arian knowledge per se, but rather the controversy itself points to how one phrase (or system of phrases) in the context of a given dispute is legitimated, not by the inherent substance of the phrases themselves, but by the strength of the narrative mechanism operative within a culture (here the culture of the Alexandrian church) at a given time for the purposes of a given institution's own self-identification (*The Postmodern Explained,* 33), and identification that is likewise extended to the laity by the normalizing force (power) of the Nicene Creed sanctioned by Imperial Rome.

Both Lyotard and de Certeau are concerned with tactics that can be used to empower the disenfranchised within a particular social arrangement that overpowers them, thus de Certeau writes, "a theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production…something in narration escapes the order of what it is that is sufficient or necessary to know, and, its characteristics concerns the *style* of its tactics" (79). The notion of tactics and strategies is important for de Certeau. He defines a strategy in this way:

> I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies…etc.) can be managed (35-36).

Strategies, then, are tools of the powerful. A tactic, by contrast is "a tool for the weak" (37), it is a "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus…lacking its

own place, lacking a view of the whole…a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* (36-38). It is through the deployment of tactics that the weak can resist hegemonic strategies that seek to regulate their identities, thus providing a sense of agency, perhaps even a greater sense of agency than is allowed by Foucault's thought. It is important to note that the role of tactics in effecting change is related to both the temporal and spatial that makes up the everyday. Again, strategies are concerned with a kind of concretion of power and structure that constitutes the order of things, and tactics with the disruption of structure and systems that attempt to manage change, and in that regard "...strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the *establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilization of time,* of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power" (38-39). It is perhaps in this way that narrative, i.e., stories, as de Certeau suggests, escapes the order of what is appropriately knowable. The theory of de Certeau developed in his *The Practice of Everyday Life* helps to balance out the often over-determined theories of Foucault, thus providing a way of speculating about the agency of those who subscribe to minority theological viewpoint, and how this minority works to legitimate itself in the face of emerging orthodoxy. This same sense of agency can be extended to the laity as well, in terms of their relation mitigating the regulative force of the creed.

Theoretical/Religious

Emile Durkheim, in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions—beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church" (46). Thus, Durkheim emphasizes the

communal aspect of religious beliefs and practices in relation to the sacred which informs these belief and practices, the function of which is to unite individuals into a community or church. All religious rites and beliefs are thus understood by Durkheim in functional terms that are related to the collective. Religion is thus conceived as the set of beliefs and practices whereby society functionally represents itself to itself (see Cosman, Introduction) or as Durkheim puts it "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities" (11). Durkheim is valuable for his insight into the social and unifying function of religion and for his discussion of the social-symbolic value of religious rites and rituals—a purpose served by religious creeds, for example. Creeds are one way, then, in which a religious community comes to functionally represent itself to itself. It is unfortunate that Durkheim's sociological study does not consider the role of conflict in the formation of collective religious identification, but he does point to notions of conflict and violence related to this process, particularly in his discussion of language, which bears on the events at Nicaea.

Though Durkheim does not address conflict specifically within *The Elementary Forms,* he is not completely unaware of a current of conflict that persists in the very process of collective identity formation. To the extent that peculiar distinctions must be drawn between social groups in order to differentiate them from each other, Durkheim seems to recognize a kind of violence in this process, writing:

> Language does not just translate thought once it is formed; it creates it. However, language has its own nature and is governed by laws that are not the laws of thought. So, since language helps to shape thought, it cannot avoid doing some

> violence and distorting it. A distortion of this kind would account for the peculiar nature of religious representations (66).

What is this peculiar aspect of religious representations? It has to do with what Durkheim refers to as the "hallmark of religious thought" (36), namely, the common pattern wherein religious beliefs (and believers) represent to themselves both the real and the ideal through presupposing a particular classification of things into a fundamental division between the *sacred* and *profane* (36). This distinction between the sacred and profane that Durkheim sees as essential to religious representations themselves can be read as part and parcel of the Arian conflict, in that heresy constitutes a faction—a minority divisiveness—within a larger group that is a part of this same system of classification to which Durkheim refers. In this case one group has the authority and power (force) to draw a distinction between the sacred and the profane in terms of a doctrinal dispute, thus defining one position (the orthodox) as sacred, and the other position (Arianism) as unorthodox, and by extension profane, in the sense that heresy is characterized by contempt for the sacred.

With the foregoing in mind, we can read the events that transpired at Nicaea through a Durkheimian lens. On the one hand, the Council of Nicaea served a unifying function by producing a Christian creed—a primary ritual artifact through which the orthodox church of the East would come to collectively represent itself to itself. The Council, however, in the stance that it took against the Arian theological position, served a likewise divisive function by excluding alternative forms of theological knowledge concerning the relation between God and Jesus. It excluded this alternate (Arian) form of knowing by distinguishing, along Durkheimian lines, one form of knowledge (the

orthodox) as *sacred* and the other (the heretical) as *profane*. So, the collective unity of the orthodox position—enacted at the level of language in the form of a specific creed—came about because of the inherent violence Durkheim ascribes to the way in which language shapes and distorts thought into a particular form.

Christopher Stead in his scholarship has also worked to recover the theological worth of Arius. Three of his works are of particular importance: his essays, "The Platonism of Arius" (1964), "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius" (1978), and his work *Divine Substance* (1977). In the first essay Stead attempts to argue that, despite the difficulties of determining the antecedents to Arian theology, a case can be made that Plato was influential, and that Arius was "more reliant on philosophical and dialectical technique than either of his opponents" (21). He writes, that "In this period the influence of Plato was everywhere predominant. Small groups of empiricists and skeptics resisted it; but among philosophers whom Christians could tolerate, the choice lay between Platonists who accepted and Platonists who denounced, the contribution of Aristotle" (21). Stead then proceeds to analyze the opening passage of Arius' letter to Bishop Alexander, which reads "we know one God alone unbegotten (*monos aggenetos*), alone everlasting, alone wise, alone good…" (21). Stead teases out the emphasis Arius places upon the term *monos* as it suggests a God who is absolutely distinct, and this becomes an important terminological way for Arius to conceive of the relation of God, who is (*ὁ theos*), in contrast to the Son who is merely (*theos*). This betrays a Platonic influence insofar as it suggests that the Son participates in the Father, thus "Arius's theory can be found within Alexandrian tradition, and in a fairly familiar context, namely those passages in which Origen relates the Logos to the Father by means of the Platonic

conception of idea and participant" (21). Here we see Arius doing something similar through an appropriation of the conceptual apparatus of Plato for his own theological purposes.

In his essay concerning "The *Thalia* of Arius and the Testimony of Athanasius" Stead carefully reconstructs Arius's only surviving theological work, *Thalia*, which is mediated through the writings of Athanasius, here in his *Contra Arianos* and the *de Synodis*, in an effort to approximate the actual writing of Arius over and against the polemical misrepresentations of Athanasius. He does this by comparing the paraphrasing of the Arian position as related in the *Contra Arianos* with the language and differentiated meter of the passages in the *de Synodis*, concluding that, though there are still numerous difficulties with solving the "riddle of the *Thalia*, the fragments transmitted to us via the *de Synodis* allow scholars to use this extract as a tool to control the testimony of Athanasius" (51). Finally, Stead's dense and precise *Divine Substance* is an invaluable resource for understanding the *ousia*-language that informed the background to Nicaea and the historical transmutation of this concept from Plato through the early church fathers. In the aggregate, what Stead's does, to use the phrasing of Rowan Williams, is to demonstrate the possibility that "Arius was religiously serious, that he was genuinely concerned with salvation as well as with philosophy or cosmology" (17)—a point generally ignored by earlier writers—and which was instrumental in presenting Arianism as a parodic Christianity (17).

Two other contributions are worth noting—Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh's *Early Arianism*: *A View of Salvation* (1981), and R.P.C. Hanson's monumental *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (1988). Gregg and Groh write,

> A certain stalemate seems to have been reached in discussions of the early stages of the Arian controversy. The first Arian spokesmen were repeatedly portrayed in the scholarly literature as philosophical cosmologians whose thought, because of a vague similarity to some earlier theological statements, were able to befuddle and beguile unsuspecting Christians and intellectually inexperienced emperors in the opening decades of the fourth century…how this small band of intellectual leaders, preoccupied supposedly with obtuse points involving the fracturing of the Godhead, could hoodwink the ecclesiastical East and command its corridors of power from the outbreak of the controversy…is left to scholarly speculation…This book is offered as an attempt to break the scholarly stalemate. We contend that early Ariansim is most intelligible when viewed as a scheme of salvation. Soteriological concerns dominate the texts and inform every major aspect of the controversy (ix-x).

So, again we have an attempt to correct the historical misrepresentations of early Arianism by demonstrating the seriousness with which Arius and his followers were concerned with salvation. Gregg and Groh ultimately conclude that early Arianism argues for an adoption of the Son by the Father. *Adoptionism* refers to living a life of moral excellence (typified by Jesus) that becomes the model for subsequent Christians to follow so they too can be adopted as children of God, thus they write:

> Elected and adopted as Son, this creature who advanced moral excellence to God exemplified that walking "in holiness and righteousness" which brings blessing on all children of God who do likewise. In this sense, and with the idea of salvation intended, the Arians preached their Christ and in that very preaching summoned believers to hope for and strive for equality with him (65).

While Gregg and Groh contend that early Arianism is ultimately about soteriology, R.P.C. Hanson offers a more comprehensive study of the scope of "Arianism", writ large, from its beginnings in 318 to the end of the controversy in 381 under the reign of the emperor Theodosius. Hanson does not consider Arius to be a major figure, but the controversy spawned by Arius's challenge to the Bishop Alexander was the "spark that started the explosion" (xix). What is important about this study of Arianism is best characterized by Hanson himself when he writes:

> The theologians of the Christian Church were slowly driven to the realization that the deepest questions which face Christianity cannot be answered in purely biblical language, because the questions are about the meaning of biblical language itself. During this search the Church was impelled reluctantly to form dogma. It was the great and first authentic example of the development of doctrine…in this case the historical events cannot be separated from the formation of doctrine (xxi).

Thus, in Gregg & Groh and Hanson we have two significant and modern attempts to demonstrate, on the one hand, how Arianism represents a genuine theology of salvation that is to be taken seriously, and on the other hand, an emphasis upon the broad and complex historical matrix in which Arianism was situated, and moreover, the way Arius/Arianism spawned the formation – via rhetorical means - of Christian doctrine in a manner inextricable from political and social circumstance.

Chapter III

Remediating the Past: Rhetoric and Religion

Alexandrian theology was product of third century learning, specifically that which occurred within the catechetical school at Alexandria.[9] Key theological concepts were often expressed by Alexandrian theologians in the idiom of a modified Platonism, and this was so for Arius. Influential in this respect was the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE) who attempted to synthesize Greek philosophy and Jewish teaching. Philo's conception of the *logos* exerted a tremendous influence on early Christian thinking (perhaps shaping the articulation of the *logo*s found in the New Testament Gospel of John) particularly with respect to the development of Christology. In this chapter I will consider how the Philonic appropriation and modification of Plato's *Timaeus* bears on Arius' theology concerning the divinity of Jesus, but first it is necessary to contextualize this by tracing, generally, the various valences of the concept of the *logos* through the broad influence of Middle Platonism[10] on early Christian thought, and for this is purpose Philo's unique exegesis of Moses via Plato is the key point of departure.

Philo and Plato: *Timaeus* and *Genesis* in Counterpoint

Roberto Radice has referred to the *De opificio* as the "nucleus of Philo's philosophy" (142), but why would Philo turn to Plato to explicate Moses? One reason may be, as David Runia has suggested, that Philo deployed the *Timaeus* to provide

[9] The Catechetical School of Alexandria was a school of Christian theologians and priests in Alexandria. It was one of the two major centers of the study of biblical exegesis and theology during Late Antiquity, the other being the School of Antioch.

[10] Middle Platonism refers to a stage in the development in Plato's philosophy extending from the period 90 BCE to the third century CE with Plotinus (205-270) and the development of Neoplatonism.

intellectual and scientific respectability to Moses' account of creation (Runia 1986, 417). It may be too that Philo saw in Plato's concept of the *demiourgos,* a way for him to both account for and maintain some continuity between God's transcendence (preserving the apophatic quality of his theology) and his immanent activity in the world, in a way that *Genesis* does not. Likewise, Plato's theory of ideas, which asserted the immaterial existence of ideal (intellectual) forms that serve as the condition for the possibility of the material/sensible world, provided the philosophical apparatus for Philo to draw the specific and fundamental distinction from the *Timaeus* (29C) between the intelligible world that perpetually exists in the divine mind (*kosmos noētos*) and the material world of sense perception (*kosmos aesthētikos*) with the "Constructor of things divine" (*tōn theōn demiourgos*)[11] serving the mediatory role between these two realms of reality. Thus, Plato's philosophical concepts were useful exegetical tools through which Philo interpreted the Mosaic writings and the absolute and certain truths contained therein more systematically, or as Jaroslav Pelikan writes, "With the distinction in the *Timaeus* between *kosmos noētos* and *kosmos aesthētikos,*[12] Philo was able to superimpose on the cosmogony of *Genesis* an entire systematic theory of pattern and copy derived from the cosmogony of *Timaeus*" (Pelikan 79). It is this conceptual interplay that constitutes one of the main ways in which *Genesis* and *Timaeus* are in counterpoint in the *De opificio*. It is important to keep in mind, however, Harry Wolfson's remarks from his own study of Philo, that what Philo offered was "an interpretation of Genesis in terms of the *Timaeus*—not in terms of the *Timaeus* as it is written, but rather in terms of the *Timaeus* as it was understood by Philo" (Wolfson qtd. in Pelikan 69), and this distinction is crucial

[11] Pl. Ti. 69C.
[12] These are my transliterations from the Greek referenced in Pelikan's actual text.

insofar as Philo's ultimate concern was to preserve the theological primacy of Mosaic law.

To better appreciate this counterpoint and Philo's rationale for it, it is necessary to examine some texts. First a key passage from the opening of Genesis, and then some important passages from Philo's *De opificio*, where he appropriated the terminology and conceptual apparatus of Plato's *Timaeus* for his own monotheistic theological agenda. Genesis 1:1 as rendered in the Septuagint begins famously with the phrase "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Jaroslav Pelikan in his *What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?* refers to the specific grammatical structure of this line, noting that it consists of a prepositional phrase (*in the beginning*), a transitive verb (*created)*, a single subject (*God*) and a direct object (*heavens and earth*), none of which easily admits of the possibility for mediation between God and creation (39). So, how to solve the problem of mediation that appears absent from these lines that describe God's creation of the world?

To solve this problem of divine mediation without compromising God's transcendence, Philo turned to Plato to explicate *Genesis.* He did so, because in Plato he found the vocabulary of necessity that would help explicate God's creational activity in a way that went beyond the simple statement of brute fact that opens the book of Genesis.[13] In the *Timaeus* (48A) Plato writes that "this Cosmos in its origin (*genesis*) was generated as a compound, from the combination of necessity and reason (*logos/nous*) and,

[13] This is important as it was Philo's chief aim to use Plato to affirm the *nomo*s of Moses (*Opif.* 13), which reads, "The beginning is, as I have just said, quite marvelous. It contains account of the making of the cosmos, the reasoning for this being that this cosmos is in harmony with the law and the law with the cosmos, and the man who observes the law is at once a citizen of the cosmos (*kosmopolitou*), directing his actions in relation to the rational purpose of nature in accordance with which the entire cosmos is administered" (See Runia, 2001: 47). Plato in this sense confirms *Genesis*.

moreover, these two causes were to be distinguished as "*to men anankeon* (the necessary) and *to te theon*" (the divine). Here we see how the demiurge formed the conceptual link between necessity as the dynamic principle (the creator necessarily creates because it is in his nature to do so) and reason (which contains the ideal and singular model/form of the world yet to be materially instantiated) in the ordering of the cosmos. Plato went on to write (68E) of how the things that are necessary are "subservient causes" subordinated to the Good (*agathos*) which is linked to *tōn theōn demiourgos,* also rendered as *demiourgos pater te*[14] (Maker and Father) in *Timaeus* (41A). Philo appropriated Plato's idea of the *demiourgos* as outlined above, understanding the demiurge to be a principle of mediation between God the transcendent creator *of* the world and God the active agent *in* the world. Philo adapted from Plato's cosmogony the notion of the *logos,* and synthesized it with the distinction we have already seen between the **noetic** and **aesthetic** senses of the cosmos.

Sections 24 and 25 of Philo's *De opificio* provide a good example of the counterpoint between *Genesis* and *Timaeus* and how Philo appropriated Platonic notions and terms in the service of his own exegetical project. Philo wrote, and it is worth quoting at length, the following:

> If you should wish to use a formulation that has been stripped down to its essentials, you might say that the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the Logos of God as he is actually engaged in the making of the cosmos. For the intelligible city too is nothing else than the reasoning of the architect [*ho tou*

[14] David Runia (1986: 441) explains that, "Here for the first time, to our knowledge, the Platonic conception of the demiurge's goodness and the Judaeo-Christian conception of God the creator are brought together, an event of enormous implications for the history of ideas."

> *architectōnos logismos*] as he is actually engaged in the planning of the foundation of the city. This is the doctrine of Moses, not my own. When describing the genesis of the human being in what follows, he explicitly declares the human being was in fact formed after God's image. Now if the part is image of an image, it is plain that this is also the case for the whole. But if this entire sense-perceptible cosmos, which is greater than the human image, is a representation of the divine image, it is plain that the archetypal seal, which we affirm to be the intelligible cosmos would itself be the model and archetypal idea of the idea, the Logos of God.[15]

In this passage, several notions from Plato are taken over and modified by Philo and then used as the lens through which to interpret *Genesis*. First, there is the distinction between the intelligible cosmos and the sensible cosmos operative in Plato, next is the conscious deployment of the concept of *logos*, and it is here that Philo deviates from Plato by giving a directly theological (monotheistic) cast to the *logos*, a point to which we will return. Indeed, Runia points out that it is in this context of the cosmogony elaborated in the *De opificio* that Philo first established the *logos* as a theological concept (Runia 1986: 446) that had long term implications for later Christian theology.

If we link the preceding passages up with sections 17 and 18 of *De opificio* where Philo used the term *demiourgos agathos* (good builder) when introducing the metaphor of the architect, it can be argued that the *demiourgos* and the *logos* became terms that collapsed into one another for Philo as a way of conceiving God as active in relation to creation. Following from Runia the *logos* played several crucial roles in Philo's theology:

[15] This translation is David Runia's from his commentary on *Philo On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*.

1) The *logos* as the place of the noetic cosmos, 2) *logos* as an instrument of creation, 3) *logos* as a replacement for Plato's cosmic soul, and finally, 4) *logos* as related to the microcosm (Runia 1986: 447-451). All of these different functions of the *logos* can be seen in the passage cited above and impinge upon the attempt by Philo to maintain a sense of God's absolute transcendence without doing violence to God's immanent participation in the created world.

It was the *logos* for Philo that was the place of the noetic cosmos, insofar as it was in the mind of God that the *paradeigma* (model) of the sensible world existed, and moreover this relation between the intelligible reality, and the sensible reality is conceived by Philo in active terms, indicated by the phrase, "the intelligible cosmos is nothing else than the *logos* of God as he is actually engaged in the making of the cosmos" (*Opif.* 24). It is in this active sense of engagement that the *1ogos* can be understood as an instrument of creation, which points to the distinction between God's *ousia* and his *dynamis* (power). This is a distinction that Roberto Radice notes in his recent essay on Philo's theology which differentiates Philo from Plato, in that, for Plato the demiurge merely established the world "according to the exemplar" of the world of ideas (Ti. 31A qtd. in Radice 132), while for Philo God can be called 'architect' because he is *creative* in the planning (132). God is so engaged in the cosmogonic account rendered by the Mosaic literature and interpreted by Philo via Plato's conceptual/philosophical scheme that "We find here for the first time the doctrine of the Ideas as the thoughts of God, and, in close association with it, the doctrine of the double creation, that is, the creation of 'conceiving' and 'giving and order' as attested in *De opificio* 13" (Radice 132). Thus, the *logos* and the *demiourgos* are collapsed (logos as demiurge) in Philo precisely so that the

creative principle is not seen as ontologically distinct from God, but rather God conceived as Father/Maker creates *at the level* of the "Logos as place of the noetic world or *in the guise* of his creative power and *through the agency* of the Logos as instrument of creation" (Runia 1986: 450). This collapsing of the *logos-demiourgos* into the active power (*dynamis*) of God as Father/Maker is the way in which Philo dispensed with Plato's notion of the cosmic soul—a more distinctly immanent principle—and connected God's transcendence to his creative involvement with and in the world without compromising either aspect of the God of Mosaic law and Jewish scripture.

Logos Theology – The Apologists[16]

Philo was, as we have seen in the foregoing, a key architect in the development of a logos theology. Philo maintained that the divine *logos* had spoken through the Old Testament prophets, and had been the subject of the theophanies of the Old Testament. The key Greek Apologists such as Aristides, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, and Theophilus of Antioch in the second and third centuries (C.E.) attempted to defend Christianity, within the context of Greco-Roman culture, against the charge of atheism. The Apologists developed the idea of the *logos* out of Stoicism, and also owed a debt to Philo in that the *logos* functioned as the reason in which all human beings take part. The double sense of the *logos* as both "word" and "reason" allows for this terminological double-meaning. According to the Apologists, Christ is the *logos*, preexistent before the

[16] There are both Twofold (binitarian) and Threefold (trinitarian) patterns within the New Testament. For the binitarian patterns see: Rom. 8:11, 2 Cor. 4:14, Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:20, 1 Tim. 1:2, 1 Pet 1:21 & 2nd John 1:13. For the trinitarian patterns see: Matt. 28:19, 1 Cor. 6:11 & 12:4, Gal. 3:11-14, Heb. 10:29 & 1 Pet. 1:2). It is important to stress that there is no doctrine of the trinity in the Nicene sense found in the New Testament, only suggested triadic patterns.

incarnation as the Father's mind or thought. In Christ, the *logos* became incarnate, but the incarnation was not the beginning of his being. Through this distinction, the apologists conceived Christ as the Father's expression or extrapolation. They sought to hold together in a reconcilable tension, not only the pre-temporal unity of Christ with the Father, but also the Son's temporal and spatial manifestation (Rausch 3).

The Apologists borrowed the Stoic distinction between the *Logos endiathētos* (the immanent Word) and *Logos prophorikos* (the expressed Word). Justin Martyr, arguably the most important of this group of second century Apologists, began with the idea of the *Logos spermatikos* (the seminal Word) – this is the notion of The Word as planted, as though a seed, in all persons, but in a limited way. Before Christ human beings had "seeds" of the Word, but could only obtain fragments of the truth. It is the *Logos*, Christ himself incarnate, who reveals the sources and ground of these fragments of truth. (*1 Apology* 32.8; *2 Apology* 8.1; 10.2). For Justin Martyr, the *logo*s was different both in name and number from the Father (*Dialogue with Trypho* 128.4). The notion of Christ as co-existent with the *logos* allowed the apologists to demonstrate how Christianity was faith in him to whom the Old Testament bore testimony, as well as to whom pagan philosophers unknowingly pointed. The attempt here was to logically link the Christ of the New Testament to the God of the Old Testament in an unbroken, undifferentiated continuity. Likewise, it provided an explanation of how God, unoriginate, eternal, nameless, and immutable could be involved in a mutable world. For Justin Martyr the *logos* functioned as the Father's agent in creation and in revealing truth (Rausch 4-5).

In short, the apologists sought to preserve the monotheism of the Christian faith, and were concerned to explain that the expression of the *logos* did not imply that the

Father was in any way stripped of his Word, nor was there any division of the divine substance between God the Father and the *logos*. They spoke of the *logos* not as a creation, but in terms of generation, thus the *logos* remained fundamentally identified with the Father. The apologists considered "the *logos*' eligibility for the title 'Son' to date from his expression from the Godhead not from his origination with the Father." (Rausch 5). The *logos* concept enabled the apologists to make the clear distinction between the *logos* and the Father without compromising the divine status of either concept.

Clement and Origen - Variation on *logos* Theology

Clement of Alexandria (flourished c. 180-205 C.E)

For Clement God was transcendent, ineffable, and incomprehensible. His was an apophatic theology (*Stromata* 2.6.1; 5.65.2) God is a "Unity beyond Unity, and a Monad embracing all reality." (Rausch 12). God can only be known through his Word/Son, who is the reflection of the Father's rationality, and likewise provided the mediation between the completely transcendent God and the immanent world contained therein. For Clement, the generation of the Word from the Father is eternal—The Word is continuously with him. Clement provided an essentially Platonic framework in which an image of the Trinity related to the Christian Triad of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Clement's trinity, though Christian in character, anticipates the later Neo-Plantonic view developed by Plotinus which consists of a triadic relationship between The One, Mind and World Soul (Rausch 13).

Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-253 C.E)

Origen of Alexander, another key earlier theologian in the Christian tradition, who expressed, again, an essentially apophatic theology, insofar as God was understood

to be incomprehensible, transcending being itself. The Word's Generation is eternal (*Princ*. 1.2.4) so it cannot be said that "there was a time when he was not." For Origen this generation cannot be compared with any physical process; it is like the emergence of will from mind (*Princ.* 1.2.6). It is an act of the Father's continuous exercise of will, not a single act for the distinct economies of Father/Son (Rausch 15). In this sense, Origen's conception of generation of the *logos* was one place in which he differentiated himself from philosophy. However, Origen contended that the Father and the Son were distinct. He insisted the Son is other in subsistence than the Father. They are two things in respect of persons/*hypostasis* (*Commentary on the Gospel of John* 2.2.10). *Hypostasis* was a Stoic concept and *ousia,* Platonic, both of which refer to real existence or essence (Rausch 14). The notion of hypostasis was often used by Origen in the sense of individual subsistence, "The Father is absolutely God, in Greek *the* God, the Word is not. Thus, when the Word is addressed by the title 'God' it is *theos*, and not *ho theos*" (Rausch 15), the distinction drawn from the *Gospel of John* 1:1, thus preserving the subordinate position of the *logos* in relation to the Father.

For Origen, the Word was God by derivation – he is at a lower level in the hierarchy of being. The Son is archetype and model. His deity is derived from the fountainhead, the Father. Origen understands the Word's derivation of deity from the Father as a continual process of contemplation. Origen thought of God as being eternally broadened downward by a number of relationships from the fountainhead, the Father, to rational creatures. In this scheme, the Word is the mediator between the Father and many rational creatures, which are called *logikoi* and *theoi* respectively (Rausch 14-15). Once more we see theology drawing upon both Platonic and Philonic philosophies and

conceptual schemata to conceive the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

Philo's Legacy: Arius and Christ as Logos

Scholarship in Late Antique Christian Studies (Wolfson 1948/56; Williams 1987; Runia 2001) has speculated on the question of the theological linkages that exist between the fourth century Alexandrian presbyter and archetypal heretic of the Christian tradition, Arius, and the would-be progenitor of Arianism, Philo of Alexandria.[17] Rowan Williams has noted that "Philo mapped out the ground for the Alexandrian theological tradition to build on, and that Arius's theological problematic is firmly within that tradition" (123), but what exactly is this theological problematic to which Williams refers? Essentially, this *aporia* concerns the attempt to theologically articulate and understand the relationship that obtains between God, conceived as absolute and transcendent creator of the cosmos, and his immanent involvement in and with the created order, that is, between God's essence (*ousia*) and his powers (*dynamis*).

Philo, who wrote several centuries before Arius, deployed the writings of Plato—most importantly Plato's *Timaeus* as detailed above—in the service of philosophically interpreting, and elaborating on the Mosaic literature that pertained to the origin and creation of the world as recounted in the book of *Genesis*. The link between Philo and Arius' use of the *logos* lies in the way Philo appropriated and modified Platonic concepts from the *Timaeus*, especially the notions of the *demiourgos* and *logos*, in his own *De opificio*, to conceptualize God's relation to and engagement with the world in

[17] Wolfson (1956), argues that Philo was the intellectual father of all Patristic thought. See also Runia (1993) who notes how R. Mortley (1956) makes the strongest claim of a link between Philo and Arius, stating that "Philo is in fact the father of Arianism" (Mortley qtd. in Runia, 190).

monotheistic terms that conformed to Mosaic Law. Both Philo and Arius used the notion of the *logos* as a means to conceptually reconcile God's transcendence with immanent involvement in the world, without a loss of fundamental transcendence. The Greek concept of *logos* was the conceptual mechanism whereby Philo retained the absolute transcendence of God without undermining God's activity in the world. This "Philonic" rendering of the *logos,* most evident in the *De opificio,* became significant for Arius too in his own theological project, wherein he attempted to, likewise, maintain God's absolute transcendence, but in the very different context of Christological (rather than cosmological) concerns that pertained to articulating the relation between God (the Father) and Jesus (the Son) in a more exact manner. With Arius, as with Philo, the notion of *logos* is deployed as a conceptual tool related to reconciling problems of relationality and continuity in divine matters. The respective theologies of both Philo and Arius, therefore, carried with them traces of Platonism that were a direct result of Philo's unique exegesis of Moses via Plato.

Philo's conception of the mediatory role of the *logos* had consequences for later Christian thought as it was deployed as a way of identifying the pre-existent Christ. The question of the Philonic heritage came to the fore in the Arian controversy of the early fourth century, for it was in that context that questions of the relation between God the Father and God the Son were being contested in the church at Alexandria, where the popular presbyter Arius had emphasized the ontologically subordinate status of the Son relative to that of the Father. We don't know if Arius read Philo but their projects contain interesting similarities, particularly the way both strove to preserve the absolute otherness and transcendence of God. The central tenant of Arius' thought is that the Father and

Son (*logos*) are dissimilar—the former is *agenētos* (unbegotten) and the latter, *genētos* (begotten). Likewise, the Father was *arrētos* (inexpressible) to the Son. For Arius there was a time when he (the Son) was not (*ēn hote ouk ēn*)[18] which suggests that the Son as created is qualitatively different from the Father and, therefore, not consubstanial (*homoousias*) with God the Father. The Son is a creature (*gennēma*). The Philonic *logos* became important in this controversy insofar as it was the Son who was conceived as the *logos* that was fashioned out of God's will, and in this way as noted by Runia, "Arius reverts back to the Philonic position in that he tries to restore God's absolute unity…the Logos was then created out of nothing solely as the result of God's will—though prior to this there was a Logos coexisting with God from eternity as a property of his essence" (Runia 1993; 191). Thus, the *logos* as a principle of mediation in Philo became, in Arius, a way to explain the mediatory role of the Son in the "Great Chain of Being."

The relation between Arius and Philo was dependent upon the extent to which Philo can be considered to hold to a theory of the double Logos—a position held by Wolfson (1956)—wherein the *logos* is both similar and related to the eternal essence of God, and equally dissimilar as a created being separate and apart from God's essence. Rowan Williams noted in his study of Arius, and it is worth quoting at length, that:

> Indeed, it could be said that the sole crucial point of distinction is what Wolfson believed to be their common ground—the doctrine of an individually subsistent Logos, distinct from the Father. What is metaphor to Philo is literal description

[18]This terminology (*ēn hote ouk ēn*) suggests another point of intersection between *Timaeus* and *Genesis* this time with particular respect to Arius, as *Timaeus* 28b suggests that the world began with a creative act: "Has it always existed or has it come to be? It has come to be (*gegonen*)." It has been argued by G. C Stead (1999: 102) that "Arius must be seen as conforming to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and creation as actual event…these points appear in his teaching that the Logos is created *ex ouk ontōn* (for the Logos belongs to the created order, even though he is first and chief of the creatures."

> for Arius. Yet apart from this we can identify three areas of shared concern. First there is the interest in divine freedom, grace signalized in Philo by the insistence on a beginning for creation and on the mind's need to be raised up by God. Second there is the idea of the Logos as essentially a mediator of God's gifts, multiplicity reflecting divine simplicity. Thirdly there is the austerely apophatic tone, stressing the difference between knowing God in his gifts and knowing him as he is; the notion of the Logos as revealing both the continuity and the gulf between God and his gifts; and the correlation of our incapacity to form a concept of our own *ousia* with our incapacity to know God's 'essence' [Philo's position on this last question must surely bear out the interpretation already proposed of Arius' denial that the Son knows his own *ousia*] (122).

In this passage, Williams points to one of the fundamental tensions in theological thought—that is since talk about God is always, and necessarily, rendered in language, and God is outside of language—talk about God is always figurative, so perhaps it is that Arius is reading talk about God the Father and God the Son too literally. This theological tension, reflected in both Philo and Arius, is simply inevitable insofar as attempts to say something true about God in language always results in a distortion because of the contingent, thus provisional, nature of language itself. Nevertheless, there are affinities between Arius and Philo regarding their respective attempts to conceptualize how it is that God mediates his relation—however mitigated that relation might be—to the world. The fundamental difference resides in the Christian and Jewish contexts, and the various purposes for which each has formulated its theological concepts. It is the apophatic tendency wherein both Arius and Philo talked about God in negative terms to preserve a

strict monotheism that maintained the unity of God where their paths converged. While we can't be certain of the direct influence of Philo on Arius we can, as David Runia and others suggest, understand Arius' theological concerns as reflecting the larger theological preoccupations of third century Alexandria most clearly expressed in Clement and Origen[19], thus Rowan Williams can write that:

> Alexandrian theology follows Philo in wishing to deploy two languages at once, but is haunted by the difficulties for *both* languages of a Logos who can subsist as a human individual, and who is to be seen as relating personally, 'as Son' to the source of all things. In this sense, at least, Philo may help us to understand Arius for whom the logical stresses of the Alexandrian Christian tradition finally proved intolerable: without wholly discarding the vocabulary and framework of metaphor going back to Philo, Arius attempts to cut the Gordian knot produced by his forebears who have taken Philo for granted (124).

Arius was therefore situated in this network of intellectual and theological forces that have both appropriated and adapted the concepts and schema of Plato's writings, especially his *Timaeus* as mediated by Philo, in the service of their own theological projects, as this dual language of the *logos* really began with Plato's notion of the *demiourgos* as transfigured by Philo and from which Arius was trying, in some sense, to extract himself in his efforts to assert the oneness of God over/against the orthodox notion of the trinity that became codified at the Council of Nicaea.

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[19] See Runia (2001: 227-228) where he writes, "The chief doctrines of Philo where he exerted his influence were the ontological and epistemological transcendence of God as expressed above all in negative theology, the figure of the Logos as quasi-independent, but not separated from God, the creation of the cosmos and of the human being in the image of God, the progress of the virtuous soul and its path toward spiritual perfection and rest in God." All of these themes and ideas are taken up by Clement and Origen who precede Arius, and further developed by other theologians of the East, particularly the Cappadocians later in the 4th century.

In summation, I have attempted here to trace the lineage of Plato's *Timaeus* for both Jewish and Christian thought and to show how Philo's exegetical use of Plato in his reading of Mosaic literature and law influenced the way Christians also read scripture and developed theology. Of particular importance, has been the attention paid to how Philo used Plato's notion of the demiurge as a way to solve the problem of how to negotiate God's transcendence from the world with his involvement in the world. It was through the dual deployment of the concept of the *logos* (a modification of the *demiourgos*) that Philo established a principle of mediation and continuity between God's transcendence and immanence, without compromising either in the process. The "Philonic" *logos* was dual in nature—it both wed the *logos* to the essence of God, even as the Logos remained ontologically distinct from God as the creative and active principle in the material world, thus mediating these two aspects of God. Clement and Origen would later adapt Philo's conception of the *logos*, the latter articulating the principle of the eternal generation of the *logos*; this idea of the eternal generation of the *logos* would be rejected by Arius in the important doctrinal contest in the Alexandrian church over the nature of Christ in the early fourth century—a controversy inextricably inflected by Philo's insistence upon the unity of God, his apophatic theology, and his dual theory of the *logos*—ultimately the heritage of Philo's use of the *Timaeus* to exegete *Genesis* was to systematize those truths for later generations.

Chapter IV

Ideology, Metaphor, and the Social Construction of Divinity

The Arian Controversy

One of the important points to keep in mind is that the theological debate over the views of the Arians had a particularly political flavor in this new environment where the Emperor was actually courting the opinion of the once marginalized, and now awestruck Christians; as Justo Gonzalez points out in his *History of Christian Thought*, this imperial favor both allowed Christian leaders the new possibility of developing their theology to an extent heretofore unknown, but likewise implied imperial condemnation or privileging of one theological position over another (Gonzalez 1987: 262). At Nicaea, the Arian view lost out to an emergent orthodoxy that the Emperor sanctioned, thus we need to consider why Constantine preferred the orthodox to the Arian position? To begin to think about this question let us now turn our attention to some of the theological tenets of this crucial historical religious debate. What, in point of fact, was at stake at Nicaea for the leaders of a church in transition and for the Christian faith itself?

In his *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Rowan Williams notes that fragments from Arius' *Thalia* (Banquet) represent the best evidence we have for constructing the independent thought of Arius, though as Williams notes, "we can never be sure that the theological priorities ascribed to Arius by his opponents were his own, even if transmitted correctly." (Williams 95),[20] and this is particularly so with respect to Athanasius. The *Thalia* was a poetic rendering of religious ideas (perhaps in the tradition of Lucretius'

[20] There are also two other sources: 1) The confessions of faith presented to Alexander of Alexandria signed by Arius and eleven supporters, and 2) Arius' letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia (see Rausch, 1980).

(*On The Nature of Things*). The following is a rendering of Arius' thought as expressed in a portion of *Thalia*[21]*:*

> The Unbegun made the son a beginning of things made and advanced him as His Son by adoption.
>
> Understand that the Monad was, but the Dyad was not, before it came to exist.
>
> Thus, there is the triad, but not in equal glories. Not intermingling with each other are their substances.
>
> One equal to the Son, the Superior is able to beget, but one more excellent or superior or greater, He is not able (to beget).
>
> At God's will the Son is what and whatsoever he is.
>
> God is incomprehensible to His Son. He is what He is to Himself:
>
> Unspeakable.
>
> The Father knows the Son, but the Son does not know himself.

There are three aspects of the theological ideas contained in this passage from Arius that are crucial to understand: First is the way in which the passage sought to preserve the absolute otherness of God (the Father: The *Unbegun*) as distinct from the *begotten* son; the Monad as differentiated from the Dyad. There is also the suggestion here that Father and Son are made of distinct substances that are not "intermingled" with each other. Next is the notion of adoption, which concerned the method whereby the Son, through an act of his will in obedience to the Father, became spiritually adopted, and thus perfected, by the Father. This notion of adoption is a key point of early Arian theology, as Arius and his followers insisted that Jesus be understood in truly human terms if he was/is to be a model that believers can emulate for their own spiritual growth culminating in salvation

[21] This translation comes from Rubenstein (1999: 55)

by adoption. Lastly, then, is Arius' insistence on the creaturely nature of the Son. Thus, as Gregg and Groh make clear in their *Early Arianism*, "the central Arian model was that of a perfected creature whose nature remained always creaturely and whose position was always subordinate to and dependent upon the Father's will" (Gregg and Groh 24). Thus, upon this reading of the *Thalia*, the point of departure of Arianism is an absolute monotheism, and an insistence on the creatureliness of the Son, such that the Son cannot be an emanation of the Father or a part of his substance, or another being similar to the Father—hence the incomprehensibility that persists between Father and Son (Gonzalez 1987: 262).

These ideas had been scandalous to Bishop Alexander in 318, seven years before the Council of Nicaea, and when Arius refused to sign a "Confession of Orthodoxy" that was drawn up by the anti-Arians at the time he was summarily excommunicated from the Church at Alexandria. Eusebius of Nicomedia, Bishop of Nicomedia—an accomplished theologian in his own right, and possibly the most astute religious figures in the Greek speaking church (Rubenstein 58) took in the exiled Arius. In a key piece of textual evidence supporting Arius' theological outlook, consider the letter he wrote to Eusebius of Nicomedia during his period of exile:

> Since my Father Ammonius is going into Nicomedia, I thought it my duty to salute you by him…for the sake of God and his Christ, how grievously the bishop attacks and persecutes us, and comes full tilt against us, so that he drives us from the city as atheists, because we do not concur with him when he publicly preaches "God always, the Son always; at the same time the father, at the same time the Son; the Son co-exists with God, unbegotten, he is ever-begotten, he is not born-

> by-begetting; neither by thought nor by any moment of time does God precede the Son. God always, Son always, the Son exists from God himself…we are persecuted because we say that the Son has a beginning, but God is without beginning. For that reason we are persecuted, and because we say that he is from what is not. And this we say because he is neither part of God nor derived from any substance. For this we are persecuted; the rest you know (Bettensen and Maunder 43).

Thus, we have in this letter a clear statement of the interpretative differences that existed between the orthodox and Arian (soon to be heretical) point of view. Over the next several years up to the point at which the Council of Nicaea convened, an elaborate campaign had been underway, largely spawned by Eusebius of Nicomedia, to have Arius reinstated and this is where things stood—hopelessly unresolved—at the time the famous council was called by Emperor Constantine. Arius, since he was not a bishop, was not present at Nicaea, and so it was Eusebius of Nicomedia who represented the Arian theological point of view. Eusebius was confident that the Arian view, when properly presented, would win the day and so he was taken aback (Gonzalez; Rubenstein) when there was hostile indignation amongst the various church leaders over the "subordinationist" idea characteristic of Arianism—that is, the notion that Jesus was relatively inferior (thus subordinate) to God. There was also objection to the Arian proposition that God alone is *anarchos*, while Jesus has an *archē*, hence the famous Arian dictum "There was when he [Jesus] was not." From the emergent orthodox point of view these ideas smacked of heresy because they fundamentally degraded Jesus' divinity, thus compromising Jesus' role as redeemer and savior of humanity, a role which could only be

fulfilled if Jesus was indeed fully God, therefore Jesus could not have been created *ex nihilo* [out of nothing], as the Arians were contending.

Into this theological morass stepped Constantine who had hoped to affect a compromise between the competing points of view, but being a Latin-speaking westerner, had little tolerance for Greek theological nuance, and as Rubenstein points out so far as he [Constantine] was concerned the Christ who appeared to him in a dream and led him to victory, thus giving him his Empire, was indeed God (Rubenstein 62). In this sense, one can argue that a parallel was being developed between Christ and the emperor. Constantine was aware that religious conflict in the past had been mitigated by the development of creedal statements, and so it was that Constantine sought to use this same mechanism to resolve the conflict between Arianism and the orthodox points of view. Creedal statements, then would inextricably relate to doctrine—the one informing the other—which in this new political climate would then be authorized by the Emperor, thus creating an "official theology" to govern both church and state – the laity and the polity. Seen another way, creedal statements served to stabilize and regulate behavior both within and without the church, thus ideally minimizing the conflict—both physical and intellectual—that had been ongoing in Alexandria over the figure of Arius and his ideas for at the previous seven years. Since anti-Arians were most of the approximately 318 bishops present at the Council of Nicaea, Constantine and his advisors were concerned that Arius's views, had they become dominant, would have set off a strong and violent anti-Arian backlash. Let us now turn our attention to the creedal statement that was developed at Nicaea—the famed "Nicene Creed."

The Nicene Creed: An Iteration of Divinity

Constantine, in an effort to resolve this conflict, suggested the critical Greek term *homoousios* (consubstantial or of one substance [*ousia*])—perhaps the most notorious Greek word in all of Christian thought (Rubenstein)—be deployed within the context of the creedal statement he had commissioned, with the hope that this concept would make clear the divinity of the Son. The creed that the council ultimately adopted was rendered thus:

> We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;
>
> And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us humans and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come again to judge the living and the dead;
>
> And in the Holy Spirit.
>
> But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic Church anathematizes.[22]

[22] This translation of the creed comes Kelly, 1973: 215-216.

So, goes the first iteration of the Nicene Creed as commissioned by the emperor and drafted by the leading bishops at the Council of Nicaea in 325, a creed that is both theologically and ideologically in stark opposition to the Arian position as elaborated in Arius' *Thalia*.[23] This was the creed adopted by the council and by imperial decree those who did not sign the entire document were banished. Everyone signed the creed except for Arius and two of his Libyan supporters, all of whom, along with several priests, Constantine immediately sent into exile (Rubenstein), and the books of Arius were subsequently burned (Gonzalez 1987: 270).

We can only speculate as to why Constantine ultimately sided with the orthodox rather than the Arian position, but this may be attributed in part to his desire to regain stability and unity within the empire. He was less concerned with the substance of the theological matters proper (see Gonzalez's *Story of Christianity*), than he was with order and gaining some measure of control over the churches within the empire. Likewise, he must have seen Arius' challenge which was played out in his candid opposition to the authority of Bishop Alexander over the many years prior to Nicaea, as equally a threat to order and unity within the church and larger community of Alexandria—Arius thus represented dissent where Constantine privileged authority (Rubenstein 62). Finally, there may be something theological after all at work here for Constantine, at least insofar as there was a developing parallel within Christian Rome between Christ and the emperor (represented in the progressive transition within artwork of the time from minor

[23] It is important to note that Arius did not strictly deny Christ's divinity since by either will or nature, subordinate or equal, God raised him up to rule with him and there was none like him (see Rubenstein, 1999: 57; McEnhill and Newland, 2004: 27). Arius also maintained the view popular in the East that Christ was "preexistent," thus God had created him before time began, but it remains unclear if this is meant literally or whether it was meant to suggest merely that God had foreseen Jesus' coming before his physical birth to Mary (see Rubenstein, 55).

expressions of funerary art and the like to more triumphal art centering on Christ as Lord of heaven and earth – see Gonzalez 1987: 261) that Constantine sought to affirm by privileging the orthodox creed at Nicaea. After all, the Arian positions sought to forge a distinction between God the Father and Jesus the Son, in order to maintain a strict monotheism; on the Arian model one could achieve perfection by emulating the Son—that is one could become godlike—by obeying the Father's will. This sort of progressive perfection, inherent in the adoptionist view advanced by Arians, could be read as a potential threat to the sole authority of the emperor, so better to have a theology that made no distinction between the divinity of God and Jesus. Rather. what was needed was a theology that insisted that Father and Son are consubstantially one—thus equally and always divine. The concept of *homoousios,* then, secured the authority of the ultimate ruler (Constantine), because on this model salvivic authority still rested with Christ as God (the imperial authority) rather than being tied into the agency of the individual believer and his/her active imitation of a creaturely Jesus who could, arguably, be understood as a potential usurper of imperial authority on the Arian model. Thus, theological iterations, creedal statements, and doctrine were used to sanction the authority of the state and, likewise, the authority of the church. Church leaders took on a new political aspect in this environment for real political force could be applied in theological debate—something heretofore unseen in Christian history up to this point.

Arius versus Athanasius: Rival Notions of Divinity

If we recall the contours of Arius theology from the outset of this chapter, Arius' theology can be restated in term of three key propositions (Williams qtd.Young 45) as follows:

1. The Logos of God is the rational ground of the world; that rational ground has no existence independent of the Logos; therefore, the Logos does not pre-exist creation.

2. God the Father is absolute unity while God the Son is multiplicity; absolute unity cannot be conceptualized without implying multiplicity (something over against the conceiving subject); therefore, the Son can have no concept of the Father's essence.

3. The Logos exists as a subject distinct from the Father; the defining qualities of one subject cannot be shared with another; therefore, the divine attributes traditionally applied to the Son must be true of him in a different sense from that in which they are true of the Father.[24]

Athanasius and "The Divine Dilemma"

The basis of Athanasius' theology was outlined in both his *Contra Gentes* and *de Incarnatione,*[25] wherein the focus, contrary to Arius, was on the saving act of the incarnation, rather than cosmology, and this in response to what can be characterized as the "Divine Dilemma." Athanasius claimed, "Man who was created in God's image and in his possession of reason reflected the very Word (*Logos*) himself was disappearing and the work of God was being undone" (*DI*, 21). In light of this degradation of humanity, though brought on by humankind through willful transgression, for which death was the consequence, what was God, being good, to do? Already in the *Contra Gentes* (2-5) Athanasius explained how human beings had *theoria* (vision) of God, but turned from the spiritual to material, thus corrupting this vision, and so Athanasius asked:

> Was he (God) to let corruption and death have their way with them? In that case, what was the use of having made them in the beginning? Surely it would have been better never to have been created at all than, having been created, to be

[24] Proverbs 8 and John 14:8 are key Arian Proof Texts for this cosmology.
[25] References to *de Incarnatione (*referred to going forward as *DI*) and the *Contra Gente*s are from Thomson's translation, 1971.

> neglected and perish; and, besides that, such indifference to the ruin of His own work before His very eyes would argue not goodness in God but limitation (*DI* 22).

The solution to God's self-conflict, one that had not only salvific force for humanity, but also retained the essential goodness of God, came in the form of the incarnation, whereby "the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world" (*DI* 23), which occurred when God, "took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own. Nor did he will merely to become embodied, or merely appear…for the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word's indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power" (*DI*, 23-25). So, in Athanasius' theological schema the divine dilemma was reconciled through the bodily indwelling of the Word (*Logos*), that is, God the Son, in the form of Jesus Christ.

Frances Young has rightly noted in *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* that salvation as a form of re-creation is Athanasius' main understanding of Salvation in Christ. Humanity would have lived *hōs theos* (as God) if it had not been for the Fall. According to Scripture "Ye are all gods and sons of the Most High." The seeds of Athanasius' doctrine of *theopoiēsis* (deification), to be amplified in his more polemical *Orations Against Arius*, was first alluded to at the end of *de Incarnatione* (54) where he contended that he (God) assumed humanity so that we might become God. It is important to note, however, that *theopoiēsis* did not obliterate the ontological distinction between God and creatures, but the humanity of the *logos* made participation in God possible though incorporation in him. Arius argued that the *logos* though distinct from other creatures, such as angels, was still a creature and not essentially God himself. For Athanasius, the central argument of

his fight with Arius is that God alone could be the source of salvation, and the revelation of God the Son represents God alone taking the initiative to deal with the post-lapsarian condition of humanity. This conviction motivated Athanasius to defend, contrary to Arius, the essential Godhead of the *logos*—the *logos* is not creature but is out of the substance of the Father (*ek tēs ousias tou patros*) because only so is our salvation realized and secured (Young 56); true revelation and salvation was impossible if the *Logos* was not God.

The Nicene Creed: Language, Knowledge, and Power

We can read now these events at Nicaea and the creedal statement that grew out of the Council in terms of the writings of Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault. Foucault's writings on religion are scattered throughout his various texts, rather that coalesced into one particular argument. Jeremy Carrette has rightly noted in his study of Foucault's relationship to religion and culture that "Foucault sees religion, alongside ideologies, philosophies, and systems of metaphysics as part of the mechanism for controlling the functioning of human life. These ideas developed into Foucault's conceptualization of religion as a political power and a 'technology of self.' Foucault is not so much interested in religious beliefs as in the practice or function of religion" (38).[26] So, a question we can ask then is what was/is the social function of the Nicene Creed?

In his essay "Pastoral Power and Political Reason," Foucault writes, "if the state is the political form of a centralized and centralizing power, then let us call pastorship the individualizing power" (136). In this essay Foucault attempts to outline the origins of the

[26] See also Bryan Turner's *Religion and Social Theory*, 1991.

pastoral modality of power, and while my purpose is not to recount that trajectory, I simply want to use this notion of pastoral power as a way of looking at the regulative function of this creedal statement we are considering. Regarding the idea of confession—and I would argue that a creedal statement is a form of confession—Foucault writes in his "On the Government of the Living" that:

> …within Western Christian culture the government of men requires, on the part of those who are led, in addition to acts of obedience and submission, 'acts of truth,' which have this particular character that not only is the subject required to speak truthfully, but to speak about himself and his faults, his desires, the state of his soul etc. How was a type of government of men formed where one is required not simply to obey, but to demonstrate in stating, that which one is? (154).

If we take these varying remarks from Foucault together we can begin to see how the Nicene Creed regulates at a social and individual level. We have seen previously how Imperial power and political/theological need intersected at the council of Nicaea, and how because of the decisions made at this ecumenical council, theology became overtly politicized. The Arian controversy is largely a matter of hermeneutics, and so the theological substance of what Arius was arguing for was equally valid at the hermeneutical level (that is, at the level of interpretation), but not at the political level. Thus, one mode of knowledge had to be privileged in order to regulate the social order (both church and state) and we have speculated on the political reasons as to why it was the emergent orthodox view, rather than the Arian view, that was "victorious" there. In Foucauldian terms, then, we can speculate that Constantine as the sole authority of the state commissioned a creedal statement as a kind of technology for social control, but

since political power was now vested in the pastorate, the creed could be used to regulate the individuals within the church and extended religious community at large through an act of self-identificatory formalized confession with salvific force.

Obedience and submission are enacted through the individual believer's affirmation and recitation of the "truths" inherent in the creedal statement, and this can be understood as a form of *exomologēsis,* which, as Foucault notes, "designates an act intended to show simultaneously a truth and an adherence of a subject to this truth. To carry out the exomologesis of one's belief is to not simply to affirm that one believes but also the fact of this belief; it is to make the act of affirmation an object of affirmation and thus authenticate it either for oneself of before others" (*On the Government of the Living* 154-55). Affirmation = authentication, and so Arius' crime was precisely that he refused to affirm and thus refused to authenticate the theological point of view that was privileged at that moment, thus heretical knowledge is knowledge that refuses to participate in the socially sanctioned mechanics of authentication. Authentication and obsolescence are then a part of an important dyad, in that failure to authenticate leads to an undermining of the authorial position to which one is asked to submit, and affirmation conversely leads to the authentication of a viewpoint that becomes made right (orthodox) through the affirmative response that authenticates, and it was in this way that the Nicene Creed became orthodox, as the mode of authentication (not inherent in the creed itself) was backed by state power in the form of the emperor, and this power lent a new political force to defining Arian knowledge as heretical.

Lyotard writes, "Politics always rests on the way one phrase, the present phrase, is linked to another…from the different phrases that are actually possible, one will be

actualized, and the actual question is, which one?" (*The Postmodern Explained* 30). He goes on to write, "to be named is to be narrated. Every narrative, even ones that seem anecdotal, reactualizes names and relationships between names. In reciting narratives, the community reassures itself of the permanence and legitimacy of its world of names… (*The Postmodern Explained* 32). Looked at this way, we can say that the church after years of persecution was, in 325, seeking a way to position itself within the culture and thus ensure its permanence—through political means—now that it was favored by the sole emperor of the Roman world at that time. In this way, the creed is both confessional in that it regulates believers' knowledge and behavior, but it is also a kind of narrative that seeks to ensure the permanency of the institution of the church—the very permanency of which Lyotard speaks—a permanence that comes through storytelling.

The Nicene Creed was and remains a story about God and the origins of his Son, and how Christians are implicated in matters of the divine...but so too was Arius' *Thalia*. The important implication in Foucault's various comments above is that language does things: note how creedal statements begin with "I/We believe in x" and this affirmation is the regulative apparatus of which Foucault speaks when he refers to the relationship between pastoral power and governance. The self becomes linked through this phrasing (*exomoloēsis*) to the divine, and this phraseology conditions a way of knowing—a knowing that becomes normalized over time in relation to the efficacy of an authorizing power. The socio-cultural, hence political, importance of language (language's lack of innocence) is equally Lyotard's point. Again, it is the specific language of creedal statements that does something—namely, affirming bodies, knowledge, and thereby individual salvation through a form of phrasing that constitutes a regime of knowledge—

but only one possible arrangement of knowledge as the Arian form persists (though it must continue to struggle for legitimation), despite its having been excised from the dominant church narrative. Lyotard defines a *différend* as a, "case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy" (*The Différend* xi). We could say that the Arian controversy constitutes a *différend par excellence* in that the outcomes of this conflict does not de-legitimate Arian knowledge per se, but rather the controversy itself points to how one phrase (or system of phrases) in the context of a given dispute is legitimated, not by the inherent substance of the phrases themselves, but by the strength of the narrative mechanism operative within a culture (here the culture of the Alexandrian and wider church) at a given time for the purposes of a given institutions' own self-identification (*The Postmodern Explained* 33), an identification that is likewise extended to the laity by the normalizing force (power) of the Nicene Creed sanctioned by Imperial Rome.

The point of this study, thus far, has been to explore the complex dynamic that exists between knowledge, language, and power, particularly where all three intersect with religion, using the Arian controversy as one historically important way to look at how we can bring rhetorical/cultural studies to bear on different social phenomena to gain a more concrete understanding of the power language has to shape thought and action. In this particular context, I have been concerned with exploring how the thought of Lyotard and Foucault can be used to analyze the role that creedal statements played (and continue to play) in the formation and regulation of bodies and minds. It is in this sense that the creedal statement developed at Nicaea is to be understood as having served as a

prominent and historically important theological, but equally, technological, document used for purposes of individual and social control within the context of a unique church-state symbiosis that developed shortly after Constantine's rise to power as sole Roman Emperor—a symbiosis that proved monumentally important for Christianity's subsequent rise to become the world's dominant religion. The Arian controversy would continue to rage on for another five decades until Arianism was finally outlawed by emperor Theodosius in 381.[27]

Metaphor and A Rhetoric of Religion: "Logography" and the Arian Controversy

The American philosopher Richard Rorty has written extensively about the relationship between language and truth, stating:

> We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that the truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages and the human languages are human creations (3).

Given the prominent role that language plays in the social construction of reality, it is worth considering the function of metaphor in relationship to truth claims, including claims about religious truth. What role does metaphor play in our conceptual and

[27] Though this controversy over the nature of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son, and the ontological variations with respect to Christ's humanity contained therein, began with Arius and his *Thalia*, Arianism as it developed became a diverse movement with many variations. *Homoian* Arianism, represented by figures such as Eudoxius and Akakius differed from the *Neo-Arianism* of Aetius and Eunomius. For a fuller treatment of the theological distinctions between these rival forms of Arianism see Hanson, 2005, especially chapters 18 and 19; Kopecek, 1979.

perceptual schemes related to notions of the divine, such as those contested at Nicaea, concerning the divinity of Jesus the Son in relation to God the Father? I posit here a brief history of some shifting concepts of metaphor that can illuminate this question.

First, I will consider Aristotle's classic definition of metaphor as found in both the *Poetics* and *On Rhetoric*, followed by Nietzsche's radically different conception of metaphor as articulated in his "On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense." I will next discuss two important twentieth century perspectives—I.A. Richard's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Kenneth Burke's *Rhetoric of Religion*. Finally, I will consider Origen's allegorical theory of scriptural interpretation. Though this theory comes centuries before the modern theories of language articulated by Nietzsche, Richards, and Burke, Origen's method has a modern sensibility to it. Samuel IJsseling in his *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict* provides a nice entry point into a discussion about philosophy, rhetoric, and metaphor that warrants quoting at length. IJsseling explains:

> Many authors adopt the position whereby a radical separation is made between a metaphorical, figurative, and transferential use of language, and an exact, adequate, literal and non-metaphorical use of language. Science and philosophy essentially exclude any metaphorical use of language. Philosophy can and must reach an adequate and exact formulation. Metaphor is still a last and at the same time dangerous and deceptive remnant of non-scientific speech or an initial step on the way 'from myth to logos.' The assertion that something is metaphorical or merely metaphorical signifies that is not scientific nor strictly philosophical (116)…the attitude of various philosophers with regard to metaphor undoubtedly manifests an important aspect of the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy.

> Those who deny any rhetorical component of philosophical speech will also reject metaphor and affirm the possibility of a non-metaphorical philosophy. Those, however, who recognize that any philosophical speech is permeated with rhetorical elements, will claim that one can never avoid metaphor altogether (125).

How rhetorical is philosophy? By extension, how rhetorical is religion? These questions turn, as IJsseling notes, on ones' view of language—is language representational or rhetorical? Must one argue for a particular way of seeing the world, or do our language and concepts accurately reflect the world? Is metaphor a merely a stylistic, ornamental device, or is it something more?

In chapter 21 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes that "metaphor (*metaphora*) is the movement (*epiphora*) of an alien (*alloitrios*) word from either genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species, or by analogy" (Aristotle qtd. in Kennedy 276). Both in the *Poetics* and *On Rhetoric* the discussion of metaphor is placed within the context of a larger discussion concerning *lexis*, or language expression—how something is said. Because of its placement within these two works, metaphor serves both a rhetorical and poetic function, or as Paul Ricoeur notes in his *The Rule of Metaphor*, "In fact the difference between the two treatises turns on the poetic function of *lexis* on the one hand and the rhetorical function on the other, not on the position of metaphor among the elements of *lexis*. Thus in each case, *lexis* is the means by which metaphor is inserted, albeit in different ways…"(328). Because Ricouer understands Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to constitute the most brilliant attempt to institutionalize rhetoric from the point of view of philosophy it becomes necessary to subject the question "what does it mean to

persuade?" to philosophical speculation (326)—speculation, that is, about discourse and language expression—*lexis,* and ultimately the role metaphor plays in the act of persuasion.

Aristotle's definition is itself already metaphorical in that *metaphora* means transference, or carrying something from one place to another (Kennedy 199) and, as Ricouer again suggests, the Aristotelian idea of *allotrios* tends to assimilate three distinct ideas: deviation from ordinary usage; borrowing from an original usage; and substitution for an absent word by an available ordinary word (332) all of which concerns *ephiphora* (movement) or the transposition of terms for the sake of a new way of seeing, "metaphor as bringing before the eyes" (*Rhetoric* 3.10) and/or a process of de-familiarization (*Rhetoric* 3.2) where "one should make the language unfamiliar." Book 3 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is all about style in the service of persuasive ends, and metaphor becomes a crucial stylistic device for these persuasive purposes—"Prose writers must pay careful attention, however, to metaphor," because it "gives style clearness, charm, and distinction as nothing else can"(3.2); and moreover "Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related—just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart"(3.11).

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the ability to find, on any given occasion, the available means of persuasion. For Aristotle, metaphor is a stylistic device used in the service of persuasive ends, and, as such, metaphor is usually related to the artistic proofs (*ēthos*, *logos*, *pathos*). Since metaphor can be deployed as a tool for invention in the construction of an appeal to either reason or emotion, then perhaps a clearer metaphor will help to

better establish the credibility of the speaker/writer. With respect to the non-artistic proofs, such as evidence, metaphor seems less applicable. Aristotle held to a view of absolute truth as something achievable through scientific demonstration, and while rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic, neither plays a role in the discovery of absolute truth (dialectic as rigorous argumentation can, however, test whether absolute truth has been achieved). Therefore, metaphor as a form of *lexis* is not related to the discovery of absolute truth, though it may have some role to play in conveying that truth through analogy. Aristotle writes "let the virtue of style be defined as 'to be clear' (speech is a kind of sign, so if it does not make clear it will not perform its function)—and neither flat nor above the dignity of the subject, but appropriate" (3.11). The poetic style is hardly flat, but it is not appropriate for speech. Here the emphasis on clarity so that speech can perform its function as a kind of sign is important. This suggests that clear language represents truth in some way that is distorted by a more poetic style, and though metaphor serves both a poetic and a rhetorical function, it remains, nevertheless, ornamental for Aristotle. Metaphor, though an important stylistic, rhetorical device does not imply that philosophy—concerned with objective substances and first principles (see the *Metaphysics*)—is itself rhetorical. Philosophy proper for Aristotle remains strictly non-metaphorical.

In the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, however, we find a different species of philosopher and thus a different species of metaphor. IJsseling rightly remarks that the works of Nietzsche signify a break in the history of philosophy, and particularly a fundamental change in attitude toward philosophy (103). This attitude could be summed up as the rejection of the philosophical pretention toward objective Truth. For Nietzsche,

philosophies and, by extension, theologies are inextricably rhetorical. In his essay, *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*, he writes:

> There is obviously no unrhetorical "naturalness" of language to which one could appeal; language itself is the result of purely rhetorical arts. The power to discover and to make operative that which works and impresses, with respect to each thing, a power which Aristotle calls rhetoric, is at the same time, the essence of language; the latter is based just as little on rhetoric as upon that which is true, upon the essence of things (117).

Language is thus not unrhetorical—it is not natural in the sense that it refers directly to things in themselves or essences that exist apart from their description in language. Language is the mechanism through which concepts such as nature or truth derive. In this sense, "the drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive" (121, for it is through language that reality and meaning are constructed. What then is truth? According to Nietzsche truth is:

> A moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force (117).

Truth is a rhetorical construct and a product of convention. As such truth is contingent, relative, and provisional. It is a product of language (metaphor) which structures thought. Over time, however, we forget that our concepts have an origin and even a genealogy, so

concepts become naturalized and their historical and illusory quality forgotten. A conventional "truth" takes on the status of a universal through this process of forgetting. This point of view stands in marked contrast to Aristotle in that all language is a form of metaphor, thus both philosophy and theology are always-already thoroughly metaphorical.

In a more contemporary vein, though he is less adamant than Nietzsche, I.A. Richards in his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* also contends that metaphor is the model of all language. He writes that "we discover that the world, so far from being a solid matter of fact—is rather a fabric of conventions, which for obscure reasons it has suited us in the past to manufacture and support" (41-42). Like Nietzsche, then, Richards seeks to call our attention to the constructed and provisional nature of our world—a world mediated through, but not reflected in language. Richards "uses metaphor as the model for his important notion of the 'interinanimation words' that determines meaning" (see Lecture 3), and places a premium on context in determining the shifting meanings of words. Likewise, the attention he pays to the ambiguity of words over an insistence on clarity and correct usage is what sets his "new" rhetoric apart from earlier iterations that understood ambiguity as a fault in language and sought to correct it. Context is the name for "a whole cluster of events that recur together" and is related to his idea of *delegated efficacy,* which refers to "the meaning of words, whose virtue is to be the substitutes exerting the power of what is not there" (32). The point of emphasizing context is to dispel what Richards calls the "Proper Meaning/One True Meaning Superstition" (11)—the idea that words have some inherent meaning, or that meaning exists apart from language and context. Speaking of the interinanimation of words, Richards writes, "I

have been leading up—or down if you like—to an extremely simple and obvious but fundamental remark: that no word can be judged as to whether it is bad or good, correct or incorrect, beautiful or ugly, or anything else for that matter, to a writer, in isolation" (51). In this way, we can only understand the meaning of a word or a phrase within the context of what surrounds it, and it is metaphor for Richards that most clearly demonstrates how the interinanimation of words works. Deploying the concept of the "tenor" and the "vehicle"—the two elements compared in metaphor—Richards can restrict interpretation to immediate verbal context, but also demonstrate how meaning is contextual and not preexistent in words themselves. With respect to metaphor we can see in the writings of Aristotle, Nietzsche, and I.A. Richards a variety of approaches to an understanding of how metaphor functions and how a particular conceptualization of language serves as a way to talk about the tension between rhetoric and philosophy/theology as either representative and non-metaphorical or philosophy as inescapably rhetorical and metaphorical insofar as all philosophic expression occurs in language, and one cannot get outside of language to talk about language

Kenneth Burke in *The Rhetoric of Religion*: *Studies in Logology* writes that "The subject of religion falls under the head of *rhetoric* in the sense that rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and religious cosmogonies are designed, in the last analysis as exceptionally thoroughgoing modes of persuasion"(v). It is in the *Rhetoric of Religion* that this idea of the metaphorical nature of language, particularly as it applies to theological language, is most fully developed. Burke writes that "If we defined 'theology' as 'words about God,' then by 'logology' we should mean 'words about words.' Whereupon thoughts on the necessarily verbal nature of religious doctrines suggest a further possibility: that there

might be fruitful analogies between the two realms" (1), so much so, that theological statements concerning the nature of "God" might be modified "for use as purely secular observations on the nature of *words*" (1). Burke stipulates six basic analogical possibilities for studying the inherent *rhetoricity* of theological language, which we can apply to a way of reading the concepts that characterize the theology of Arius with that of Athanasius, most clearly represented in the Nicene Creed, as an example of logology in action

Analogy #1 is concerned with the link between "words" (lower case) and The Word (*Logos, Verbum*), as it were, in capitals (7). Words, Burke contends, "in the first sense have a wholly naturalistic, empirical reference. But they may be used analogically, to designate a further dimension, the 'supernatural' " (7). It is important to clarify that whether or not there is a realm of the "supernatural," there are words for it, and this suggests the non-representational character of language. Burke goes on to say that in this "state of linguistic affairs there is a paradox. For whereas the words for the 'supernatural' are necessarily borrowed from the realm of our everyday experiences, out of which our familiarity with language arises, once a terminology has been developed for special theological purposes the order can become reversed" (7).

In Analogy # 2 words are to the non-verbal things they name as Spirit is to matter. There is a sense in which the word "transcends" the thing it names.

Analogy #3 concerns the negative, which plays a major role in both language and theology.

Analogy #4 involves the linguistic drive toward the Title of Titles, a logic of entitlement that is completed by thus rising to ever and ever higher orders of generalization.

Analogy #5 concerns the relation between "time" and "eternity."

Analogy #6 emphasizes the notable likeness between the design of the trinity and the form underlying the "linguistic situation."

When these analogies are applied Arius' *Thalia*, the analysis looks something like this;

> **The Unbegun made the son a beginning of things made and advanced him as His Son by adoption—**(Analogy 4)—*the Son is elevated to the Title of Titles (God),* also *the relation between time and eternity* (Analogy 5) *is expressed in this formulation*. The use of "Unbegun" here also corresponds to the use of a negative in theological language (Analogy 3).
>
> **Understand that the Monad was, but the Dyad was not, before it came to exist—**(Analogy 5)—*the Monad and Dyad reflect the tension between being and becoming or time and eternity.*
>
> **Thus there is the triad, but not in equal glories. Not intermingling with each other are their substances**—(Analogy 6)—*the likeness between the design of the Trinity and the underlying form of the linguistic situation or trying to apply mundane terms borrowed from the empirical realm to talk about the transcendent -substance and attribute or spirit and matter*—(Analogy 2).
>
> **One equal to the Son, the Superior is able to beget, but one more excellent or superior or greater, He is not able**—(Analogy 4)—*the linguistic drive towards the Title of Titles as expressed here by articulating the distinction between Unbegotten Father and the begotten Son as an essential relationship of inequality, but one in which the Son advances to a state of relative equality with the God the Father.*
>
> **At God's will the Son is what and whatsoever he is**—(Analogy 1)—*the borrowing of empirical terms such as Father/Son, but used metaphorically, to characterize a relationship that is both within and beyond the empirical but can only be expressed in terms of the empirical terms from which this creedal formulation borrows and repurposes for supernatural ends.*

> **God is incomprehensible to His Son. He is what He is to Himself: Unspeakable. The Father knows the Son, but the Son does not know the father**—(Analogy 3)—*God the Father who exists outside time exists in negative relation to his Son, who comes into being in time, and thus is qualitatively different from God the Father. Thus the Son is characterized in relation to God, not by what he is, but by what he is not (immutable, eternal, etc.) and it is because of this inherent negative relation the Son can never fully know the Father*.

Thus,the substance language of the Nicene Creed—*homoousios*—is the specific terminology that is designed to undo this negative relation, hence the phrasing of the final stanza of the initial iteration of the Creed:

> **But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic Church anathematizes.**

We see here in the last statement above, taken from the Nicene Creed, a variation on Athanasius' desire to collapse the ontological distinction between God the Father and God the Son—a distinction that Arius sought to preserve as a necessary one. All of the same analogies, as discussed in relation to Arius' theology, are succinctly redeployed in the Nicene Creed in order to collapse the distinction between time and eternity, being and becoming, and the negative difference between God the Father and God the Son is transmuted into an absolute positivity in the form of the substantive similarity between Father and Son which seeks to posit both similarity and difference within the same at the same time. Thus, we are left with rival conceptual systems which both use metaphor and analogy as a way to structure our experience of the divine and persuade us of the truth of their competing claims. It is unclear how both Arius and Athanasius understood language—their understanding was shaped largely by scripture and tradition, rather than

through a coherent theory of language; however, an objectivist view of language in the Western tradition can be traced from the present day back to the Pre-Socratics (see Lakoff and Johnson, 2003), and one can speculate that such an understanding had some measure of influence on both Arius and Athanasius in term of how they read and understood words and the function of words. Thus, some of my analysis below will be no doubt be anachronistic, though this does not belie its importance for my overall argument.

If we look at the tensions between these competing theological accounts of how to understand and relate to the divine, we can see how this debate of ancient origins, yet still contemporary, is illustrative of the limitations of an objectivist view of language. As we have seen, this objectivist view of language presumes that we have unconditional access to truths about the world, and language is a transparent conduit through which communication of these truths is clearly expressed. On this view, metaphor would be seen (as it is by Aristotle) as merely figurative and thus rhetoric an inferior mode of communicating truth. The account of metaphor outlined above by Nietzsche, I.A Richards, and Kenneth Burke runs counter to this tradition. On this view metaphor is a device for understanding and has less to do, if anything, with objective reality or objective, capital "T" truth; put another way, truth is always relative to a given conceptual system, and the metaphors that structure it. In this sense, then, truth is not absolute or objective but is based on understanding. Sentences about God the Father and God the Son do not have any inherent, objectively present or given meaning apart from a specific context, and the various sentences that circulate within that context, thus, communication in general cannot be a pure transmission of such meanings (Lakoff and

Johnson 2003) apart from a context. To believe otherwise is to run the risk of elevating cultural constructions to the status of universals, which in turn can be used to legitimate oppression, and as outlined in the previous chapters it becomes a matter of persuasion and power that determines which set of competing truth claims wins out over another. The lingering question, then, is how to move beyond this to allow for rival conceptions of religious truth to peacefully coexist? It seems to me that a new understanding of metaphor has the potential to lead us out of this dilemma, and this could come in the form of Patristic retrieval, that is, re-appropriating the writings and interpretive methodologies of the early Christian theologians, such as Origen, to combat a strict biblical literalism.

Origen of Alexandria his *De principii*s (*On First Principles*) offers one example of a theory of biblical interpretation that recognizes the limits of a literal reading of scripture. Origen proposes a threefold meaning to scripture that requires careful reading to pull out the full meaning of a given scriptural passage. He writes:

> Each one must therefore portray the meaning of the divine writings in a threefold way upon his own soul; that is, so that the simple may be edified by what we may call the *flesh*[28] of the scripture, this name being given to the obvious interpretation; while the man who has made some progress may be edified by its *soul*, as it were; and the man who is perfect and like those mentioned by the apostle [St. Paul]—this man may be edified by the *spiritual* law…For just as man consists of body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture..(275-276).

[28] The italics are mine.

Thus, for Origen, the reading of sacred scripture is a complex task that requires a complex hermeneutic—one that attends not only to the plain meaning, but also to the hidden, symbolic or allegorical meanings in the text. The most basic reading of the scriptural text is the literal (fleshly/bodily) or plain meaning reading, but this reading, though it may be useful to the practicing Christian believer, may not contain the full meaning or truth of a passage. In some cases, the literal meaning may not be present at all or it may not make plain sense (reading the account of creation in the book of *Genesis* as occurring in six literal days, or a literal reading of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, for example), and in such cases the reader must look for the deeper soul or spiritual meaning of the text. Origen even says that, "The Word of God has arranged for certain stumbling-blocks, as it were, and hindrances and impossibilities to be inserted in the midst of the law and the history, in order that we may not be completely drawn away by the sheer attractiveness of the language" (285). Origen's model outlined here requires that attention be paid to the history, context, and language (grammar) of a text, but also recognizes that when the plain reading of scriptures is at odds with reason or experience, there may be a more nuanced allegorical or metaphorical reading required to bring out the spiritual truth of the text. In this sense, then, Origen's biblical hermeneutic recognizes the role that metaphor plays in relation to truth, Origen's view in this respect runs counter to Aristotle's devaluation of metaphor, and can serve as a Christian alternative to literalist readings of the biblical text, which insist that truth inheres through an objective correspondence between words and things. One could also see the allegorical method offered by Origen as a potential corrective to Arius' more literal treatment of the ontological relation between Jesus the Son and God the Father.

Having now considered the role of metaphor in relation to the discussion of differing claims about the Trinity, in the next chapter, the focus shifts back to the social, with an attempt the provide a schematic of the historical outworking of the rise of the social function of the Nicene Creed.

Chapter V

The Social "Technological" Function of the Creed

In the preceding chapters I have attended to the way in which the notion of *Logos* has been rhetorically instrumental and historically assimilated from Plato, beginning with Philo, through the second century Greek Apologists, and subsequently into Christianity in a specifically Alexandrian form (via Philo, Clement, and Origen). Both the orthodox and "unorthodox" alike have appropriated from these earlier traditions, particularly Arius, the notion of the *Logos/Word*, in the shaping of a particular conception of Jesus as the divine Son of God, characterized in terms of a type of intermediary, and his ontological relation to God the Father in this capacity.

At this point, I want to give some consideration of the social function of the Nicene Creed, though this will be both schematic and speculative since there is limited historical documentation that illustrates exactly how, when, and to what extent the Nicene Creed became a part of the regular Church liturgy, though we know from its continued use today in the Catholic, Protestant, and the Eastern Orthodox traditions alike that it has a regulative and existential force in the lives of contemporary Christian believers. In this respect a consideration of the self-evident, regulative function of the Creed substantiates, retroactively, so to speak, its historical and rhetorical importance, even if tracing a strict trajectory from its initial iteration at Nicaea to its later adoption into standard liturgical and ritual practice is unclear. Nevertheless, exploring some of the historical antecedents allows for some more substantial speculation on the role that the Creed potentially played at a social, administrative, and existential level, and I will attempt to extend this analysis

forward by using the notion of collective memory which comes out of the field of the Sociology of Knowledge.

I begin with A.H. M. Jones' two volume, *The Later Roman Empire (284-602): A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, which is a comprehensive study that deemphasizes the doctrinal controversies of the period discussed above and, instead focuses on the growth of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Following from Jones' study, I will outline some of the institutional arrangements that pre-existed the Constantinian *ecclesia*, including the general administrative structures developed during the reign of Diocletian that were later modeled by the church in the development of its own administrative structure, the general relations between bishops and society, and the roles of synods and council before concluding by considering the function of collective memory as a way to discuss the lingering efficacy of the Nicene Creed.

Diocletian

The basic disparate elements of church organization formed during the fourth century (and into the fifth) stemming from the organizational reforms that developed during the Great Persecution prosecuted under the reign of Emperor Diocletian[29] at the close of the third century and beginning of the fourth (Jones, 875-876). Social life in late antiquity was organized primarily with a city-based authority structure, thus the administrative structure of the church, though an ecclesiastical institution, mirrored the organizational pattern of secular culture. Except for Egypt and suburbicarian Italy, the church adapted to shifting organizational trends that occurred within the secular provinces (881). Diocletian's survival has also been attributed to his constitutional and administrative

[29] Diocletian's reforms began after his ascension in 284; the Great Persecution is dated 303-313.

reforms, the constitutional scheme proposed by Diocletian being of relevance (41). Jones notes that "His genius was that of an organizer, and during his twenty years' reign he built up a solid administrative structure which gave the empire a fresh lease on life" (42). However, Diocletian, having created a plethora of provincial governors, soon discovered that this placed too much pressure on the central government to be manageable. To address this tension, he grouped the provinces into smaller units (or larger circumspections) called dioceses, each of which was directed by a deputy of praetorian prefects (46-47) or *vicarius*, and here is an example of administrative structures in the secular Roman culture carrying over into the ecclesiastical culture, as vicars and the diocese are terms that are still associated with church hierarchy and governance to this day.

Apart from the New Testament itself, is the *Didache* (doctrine) or 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," which is the earliest known Christian handbook (perhaps from the late first century) that was used for advising the congregational organization and practices. The *Didache* consists of sixteen chapters, typically divided into three sections, the first of which is referred to as the "Document of the two Ways" (the one of life and the other of death). The second part consists of liturgical instructions, including baptism, and the final part is a manual of discipline (Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 66-68). The *Didach*e is legalistic in tone, but it is important from a historical standpoint given its liturgical function and the instruction given regarding baptismal rites and the administration of the Eucharist; it also provides evidence of a transitional period between a more primitive system of "charismatic authority and the hierarchical organization that was developing within the church" (Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 71). This

more primitive model consisted of offices held by apostles, prophets, and teachers (I Corinthians 12:28; Matthew 23:34; 28:19-20), and was markedly different from the structure that was emerging as universal within the church – a system of bishops, presbyters, and deacons by the beginning of the fourth century (Hall 417).

In addition to the *Didache* as a source to help reconstruct early church ritual and proto-governance, we can also look to one of the letters from Pliny the Younger (10.96-97) who was the governor of Bithynia from 113-115 CE, to Emperor Trajan, concerning what to do when he encountered Christians for the first time. Pliny, in his effort to determine who denounced him as Christians, refers to the torture of two female slaves who were called "deaconesses," writing of Christian that:

> They were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their customer to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food (10.96-97).

Thus, we can see in this early letter from a Roman official, as he encountered Christians for the first time, the emergent inner mechanisms and rituals (hymns, oaths, the Eucharist) that bound and specifically identified/differentiated the community of Christians prior the formal establishment of official creeds and systematic governance in the form of presbyters and bishops.

Likewise, Justin Martyr in his *First Apology* (155-157) provided the oldest surviving formal defense of the Christian faith to Emperor Antonius Pius, and in this

context detailed the then contemporary practices and rituals of the early church community. These practices consisted of baptism, "I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ" (chapter 61); administration of the sacraments, "Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water" (Chapter 65); the Eucharist, "And this food is called among us the Eucharist of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that all the things we teach are true and has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins and unto regeneration…" (Chapter 66), and the weekly worship of Christians, "But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn; and on the day after that of Saturn which is the day of the Sun…" (Chapter 67). Again, we see in Justin Martyr's early defense of the Christian faith a portrayal of ritual practice that sought to create the emergent parameters of Christian thought, identity and expression that the creeds would later formalize.

Though the *Didache*, Pliny's Letter to Trajan, and Justin Martyrs' *First Apology* each provide insight into a range of early ecclesiastical church organization and practice there was no real distinction between bishops and presbyters at this juncture in history. Three early bishops that point to the later development of hierarchical distinctions are Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, and Cyprian of Carthage. These early Christian leaders lived during the early second to the mid-third centuries, and each contributed to the notion that there was to be one bishop in each city who was institutionally and symbolically important to a

given church community, and who also functioned as the final adjudicator in local church matters. It was Clement of Rome, writing near the near the end of the first century who initially asserted in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, clerical authority based on the idea of apostolic succession.[30] Irenaeus wrote during the late second century (180's) and combined the idea of apostolic succession found in Clement with the specific role of the bishop. Perhaps Cyprian more so than the others is most influential in this regard, given that his notion of the bishopric came directly from his background in civil governance, and scholars have noted the parallels between church government and city councils (Hall 420), particularly in the distinction between, for example, the *ordo clericus* (clergy) and the *ordo laicu*s (laity) which mirrors that between the *plebs* (ordinary citizen) and the curial class, or propertied men that ran the city's public affairs (420).

Constantine

Constantine's reign is well documented in its religious aspects both by Lactantius and Eusebius, though the former carries his narrative down only to the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which was originally planned to end with Galerius's recantation in 311, was later extended to the fall of Maximin in 313; though as finally published it was brought down to Licinius' defeat in 324, and is very cursory towards its close. At the end of the fourth century Rufinus translated Eusebius into Latin, and added a sketchy continuation down to 395, but apart from this the history of the Church was not developed again until the middle of the fifth century, when

[30] Apostolic succession refers to a line of authority that is to be traced back directly to Jesus from the Apostles wherein certain holy men are appointed successively to continue the leadership and mission of Jesus. These individuals do not derive their authority from the congregation, and so cannot be deposed by the congregation, thus Clement refers to these persons in charge of directing the church as both bishops *(epispokos*), or overseers and presbyters, but without clear distinction at this point between the two.

Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret wrote Ecclesiastical Histories covering the same ground, starting with the conversion of Constantine. (Jones 77). Constantine's position during this early period (312-313) was bit confused and unclear. He continued for some time to issue coins in honor of the Unconquered Sun, and in 321 he issued an edict forbidding the legal proceedings "on the day celebrated by the veneration of the Sun." (77). The idea of Sunday holiday is uniquely Christian, but the words quoted suggest that Constantine believed that the Christians observed the first day of the week as being sacred to the Sun. Constantine's beliefs may have gone through a syncretistic phase, when he regarded the Highest Divinity who sent him the sign of the cross (on the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge) as identical with the Sun, but his actions and his public pronouncements make it clear that from 312 he regarded himself as a worshipper, and moreover the chosen servant of the Divine Power whom the Church worshipped (81). Of course, the emperor and everything associated with him remained scared and divine, and opposition to him continued to be regarded as sacrilege. (93).

The Council of Nicaea

The Council of Nicaea not only sought to mediate theological matters already discussed, but it also legislated on the constitution of the church, defining and most likely strengthening the authority of the bishop of the metropolis of each province over the other provincial bishops (87). Importantly, the Council of Nicaea did something to clear up the chaos which had previously prevailed in the higher levels of church government, insofar as it gave sanction to the provincial organization under the leadership of the metropolitan bishop, and accorded its recognition to certain larger units of government,

Egypt and the Suburbicarian provinces under Alexandria and Rome (885). In this way, as Jones notes, the Council of Nicaea:

> ...put the provincial councils on regular footing and defined their competence…the imperial government often took the initiative. Only the emperor could summon a general council of the whole church. Constantine had established the precedent at Nicaea, and there was in any case no central ecclesiastical authority which could act. The emperor would often summon smaller councils to deal with some problem on which a provincial council was incompetent to act (885).

In this sense, the ecumenical council that convened at Nicaea established parameters both theologically and administratively with authority backed by the power of the State. Both the Council and the Creed served this regulative and social function designed to stabilize the crisis in Alexandria and further the formal structuring of church in its emergent institutionalization within the larger empire. It is important, however, to stress that, though the church had no official creedal statements or formula prior to the Council of Nicaea, the evidence is scant that the Nicene Creed supplanted the more local forms of baptismal confession. Creeds emerged, as Stuart George Hall notes, within "the context of preparation for baptism and gradually became incorporated into the liturgies" (425). Thus, though the Nicene Creed (and subsequent creeds) could be understood in this sense and so were not developed primarily as a litmus test for orthodoxy, but as deriving out of confession and doxology, this suggests that the early church had the liturgical and moral life of its congregation as its focus, just as much as orthodoxy itself. (425). However, this does not undermine the contention that creedal *formulae* can be repurposed to be used in

politically and ideologically regulative ways, but that creedal *formulae* serve multiple, even conflictual rhetorical purposes.

Heresiology, Collective Memory, and Reputational Entrepreneurs

Rebecca Lyman has described "Heresiology" as "the combative genre for asserting true Christian doctrine through hostile definition and ecclesiastical exclusion," and can be read as both a political and ideological claim made through the demonstration, exclusion, and silencing of "the other" (296). Heresiology was a form of Christian discourse the developed in the first three centuries of after the death of Christ, and served as a mechanism to refute theological error and establish right belief, as well as a specific spiritual identity. In second-century Rome, Justin Martyr began using the neutral term for sect or choice (*hairesis*) as a demonic label for Christian error, hence, "heresy" (297). The use of labelling opponents as erroneous or novel, as well as the construction of genealogies exclusively designed to illustrate an illegitimate succession of opposing ideas, were accepted practices in Hellenic forms of debate, but both Justin Martyr in his *Apology*, and later Irenaeus in his *Against all Heresies*, fused together demonic inspiration with doctrinal error, thus creating a sharp boundary, both spiritual and apocalyptic, between truth and 'heresy' (297). The image of the heretic was represented rhetorically through the act of naming, thus casting the heretic according to a litany of immoral charges – deceptive, duplicitous, promiscuous, demonic, effeminate, as well as medical metaphors such as, sick, contagion, and others to imply as sense of deformation.

The development of central institutions of theological and imperial authority in the fourth to sixth centuries transformed the sectarian practices of Christian unity and diversity (Lyman 302). Prior to the fourth century no central political or institutional

mechanism existed to regulate consensus. Rather a kind of relative consensus was created through a web of various theological and ecclesiastical communities. However, in the wake of the Nicene controversy, which lasted over sixty years, a prominent and fundamental restructuring of the church began, resulting in the future mediation of Christian theological controversy though creeds and councils. The final rendering of the Nicene controversy was effected in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon with the iteration of the Niceno-Constantinoplitan Creed, which came to be used by all sides of the Christological controversies going forward as a sign of traditional orthodoxy (Lyman 302). Though the Nicene Creed had been adequate in the past, new heresies of the fourth century called for the expansion of the creed during the contemporary controversies; those who rejected Chalcedon showed their orthodoxy by placing the Nicene Creed within worship for the first time (see Chadwick, 562-80) and by the sixth century, the Nicene Creed was used for school exercises by children. (See Humfress, qtd, Lyman, 311).

Returning to the writings of Emile Durkheim who, as noted earlier, explained in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* that there is no religion that is not a cosmology or speculation on the divine (10), and that "language is not only an external envelope of thought, it is thought's internal structure" (66). It is through concepts, rites, and symbols that a religious community is able to represent itself to itself – the rites and rituals bind the group establishing its collective, even institutional identity. Picking up the thread of Durkheim's sociological analysis of religion, Maurice Halbwachs writes about the power of language in the shaping of communal representations. In his *On Collective Memory* Halbwachs writes, "No memory is possible outside of frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (43), and so it is

language or "verbal conventions [that] constitute what is at the same time the most elementary and the most stable framework of collective memory" (45). Thus, Halbwachs, like Durkheim, also sees language as the condition for the possibility of thought and, particularly, memory. Concerning religious collective memory specifically, Halbwachs poses an interesting question when he asks, "How can we explain that the Christian religion—entirely oriented toward the past,[31] as is the case with all religion—can still present itself as a permanent institution, that it claims to be positioned outside of time, and that the Christian truths can be both historical and eternal?" (88); creedal statements like the Nicene Creed, then, serve this purpose of being both historical and eternal, and it is through the recitation of creeds that memory is preserved and by which the collective memory of the church is recalled. The fact that the Nicene Creed is still used as a part of Christian ritual and worship in the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions alike, serves to answer Halbwachs' rather rhetorical question about how institutions effect their sense of permanency through various traditions and rites.

For Halbwachs, these rites and ceremonies in which collective memory is maintained are the products of specific discrete historical events, but over time the specific nature of the event—its very historicity—is forgotten, and the institution, as well as its ceremonial customs, forged out of the substance of the historical event is simply taken for granted as a brute fact. Halbwachs writes that "the church gives a privileged status to the early years of Christianity and to the acts and words that had the most impact

[31] This is, of course, only one part of the picture, and I would take exception with Hablwachs' insistence on religion being exclusively oriented toward the past, as there is a tradition in Christian theology that is focused on the eschaton and thus fundamentally future directed; a singular example of a future-directed Christian theology being Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*: *On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (SCM Press, London,1973).

at that time" (91). The emphasis upon words and acts is important as the Nicene Creed is exactly that – a set of words embodied in the act of reciting that consecrates memory and links the present to past events. Halbwachs goes on to say, "What the church now sees as outside of time in terms of eternal truths took place during a strictly determined historical period" (91). It is in this way that the contemporary church can thus recite the Nicene Creed as though it existed in isolation from the pre-modern debate between Arius and Alexander over the nature of Jesus Christ. Sociologist Lewis Coser, in his introduction to Halbwach's work on collective memory has noted Halbwachs' tendency to understand the past to be a social construction that is largely shaped by present concerns (25), and it is this "presentist" tendency in Halbwachs that the American sociologist, Barry Schwartz has criticized, suggesting that the past is an admixture of both persistence and change, and not merely a social construction. While we can debate this presentist approach to history, it can be argued that this presentist way of remembering/constructing the past is relevant to the aftermath of the Arian controversy, to the extent that the modern churches recites the creed, and in so doing interpret the past events in the formation of this religious statement in terms of the present, thus isolating the contingent forces that shaped the creedal language by which religious collective memory is represented. Halbwachs also speaks about heresies, writing that:

> What distinguishes heresies from more or less orthodox doctrines is not that the first are inspired by the present or the recent past; rather it is the way in which each recalls and understands the same period of the past which is still close enough for there to exist a great variety of remembrances and of witnesses (95).

What is important here in this passage, as in the foregoing discussion of Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, is the way in which memory is conceived to be social construction of discrete past events as interpreted/reconstructed by a given community; and it is the community that in turn conditions the development of a particular way of remembering. Halbwachs points out in the passage above that both the orthodox and the heretic are equally involved in the constructing of social/religious memory, and this likewise implies a notion of power—something not fully explored in Halbwachs, though implicit in the idea of collective memory. If memory is a re-construction of past events, it must be authorized by someone, and that someone must occupy an authorial position in order to orchestrate memory. With respect to the Arian controversy, it is the theological figure of Athanasius who would become the architect of Arian reputation. In this way, we can begin to see the link between collective memory and the making of reputations – reputations that become perpetuated for good and ill throughout history.

I have been paying particular attention to the role of language in both Durkheim and Halbwachs, and how language establishes collective identities. Language is an equally important factor in terms of the idea of "Representational Entrepreneurs." This notion of the reputational entrepreneur comes out of the sociological writings of Gary Fine and refers to his particular application of Halbwachs' thought concerning collective memory.[32] Fine writes, "Reputational entrepreneurs attempt to control the memory of historical figures through motivation, narrative facility, and institutional placement" (1159). These three aspects—motivation, narrative facility, and institutional placement—

[32] Though Fine is dealing with way President Harding has been historically represented as a failure, by those who have the power to shaper historical memory and thereby reputation, it seems that Fine's model also works for Arius, who represents another kind of failure.

are crucial to the way in which historical memory is created: one must have a reason for constructing a memory in a particular way; one must have the ability to write (or speak) that memory accordingly; and, finally, one must be positioned within an institution that provides the power to both disseminate and legitimate a particular historical memory or figural reputation to others. Reflecting on Halbwachs' comments regarding the fundamental relation between verbal conventions and the formation of collective memory (or reputation as a form of collective memory in our case), perhaps we can re-conceptualize Fines' terminology here by saying that reputations are shaped in terms of *ideology*, *rhetoric*, and *power*. These three forces are certainly in play in the Arian controversy and continue to be instrumental factors in how Bishop Athanasius enacts Arian reputation after the development of the important creedal statements, and early doctrinal positions developed under the auspices of Emperor Constantine. I will only touch here on some of the ways in which Athanasius attempted to control the memory and reputation of both Arius and Arianism through a kind of rhetorical-ideological strategy which sought to construct the memory of Arius/Arianism in terms of heresy rather than a viable, if alternative, theology.

Regarding Fines' notion of institutional placement, Athanasius became Bishop of the church at Alexandria following Alexander's death in 328. This placement at the head of the Bishopric a few years after the decisions made at Nicaea, puts Athanasius in a prominent institutional position that provided him with the means via the pulpit of the church to disseminate a particular and ideological rendering of the teachings of Arius and the Arians, who still had a minority following within Alexandria at the time of

Athanasius' rise to power when Constantine sought to use the considerable reputation of Athanasius as a way of stabilizing the region.[33]

In an effort to demonstrate the beginning of this reputation making inaugurated by Athanasius, I want to consider, in brief, some remarks made by Athanasius in his *Contra Arianos* (*Against the Arians*). He writes:

> Impious man [Arius] expressly declares that the Son is a being altogether by Himself, and has no fellowship with the nature of the Father. These affirmations are taken from that absurd and ridiculous book which Arius has written…How, then can anyone who hears these things and the verses of his "Thalia" think of Arius in any other way than as a buffoon, and abominate his behavior. When he seems to name God's Holy Name it is evident that it is only for the same purpose as the serpent made use of it to the woman (*Contra Arianos* 16).

Later Athanasius writes, "you Arians say and believe, at the suggestion of Satan, that there was a time when the son was not" (*Contra Arianos* 21); and lastly:

> I had indeed hoped that the arguments I had brought forward against the blasphemies of the Arians, and against the absurdities and errors of their doctrines would have been sufficient to entirely confute these heretics, and to reduce them

[33]This is a bit of a generalization to illustrate my point since Athanasius' career was marked with a great deal of upheaval and displacement. Athanasius was to occupy the Alexandrian see, off and on, for nearly forty-five years until his death in May of 373, but his tenure was neither unchallenged, nor uninterrupted. A rival bishop was elected by the Melitians and Athanasius was forced to defend his position. Athanasius spent that last eighteen months of Constantine's reign in exile in Gaul, and returned to Alexandria in 337, but was later deposed in 339 and replaced by the Cappadocian Gregory who took over the church as bishop at Alexandria where he remained until his death in 345. Athanasius then resumed his position at Alexandria, after a period of exile, for another decade until George of Cappadocia was appointed to replace him in 356. George of Alexandria was later lynched in 361 and Athanasius's theological opponents laid claim to the see at Alexandria for the last twelve years of Athanasius' life. These changes and disruptions were driven by political and theological change between 328 and 373 as the balance of power alternated due the rise and fall of various emperors who ruled a Roman Empire that was divided in the wake of Constantine's death in 337. For a more complete treatment of the political and theological machinations of this period see Barnes, 2001.

> to silence; and to make them sensible of, and sorry for, the impieties they have invented…But alas! It is no easy matter to make them acknowledge their errors. Just as swine and dogs wallow in their own vomit and mire, even so do they revel in their irreligion…(*Contra Arianos* 82).

Gary Fine suggests that there are three primary ways in which reputations are created and solidified – *objective* explanations that attempt to deal with "reality"; *ideological* explanations in which the past is manipulated to serve the present; and *constructed* explanations which attempt to construct a reputation solely from the perspective of a given supporter or detractor; each of these three positions attempts to link the personal to the political (1162-65). In the case of Athanasius, it is the ideological explanation that is most operative and it is linked to Athanasius' desire to maintain control of his church and the idea of an eternal truth related to the nature of Jesus' divinity that Athanasius understands to be threatened by the Arian alternative.[34]

In the few passages cited above we get a taste of how Athanasius, through his harsh rhetoric, sought to characterize both Arius and Arianism by defining both in derogatory ways (typical of personal invective employed in political conflict): "buffoons," "irreligious," "satanic," "swine," "impious," "abominable," "deceptive," and

[34] As Rubenstein (1999) rightly notes in the opening chapter of his study, the Arian theological position was quite destructive from Athanasius' perspective in that Arius and the Arians abused scripture to distort the idea of the incarnation, which constitutes the central mystery of the Christian faith and on which individual salvation is dependent. So, there were strong ideological motives here for Athanasius. Political motives were also involved, however, as Athanasius had been previously exiled by Constantine for suspected treason against the throne and in 337, after the death of Constantine, Athanasius was recalled from exile to retain his position within the church. So along with the theological-ideological motive, there was the political motive informing Athanasius' attempt to control Arius' reputation along with that of Arianism, in general. It is important also to note that Arius died an ignoble death on the toilet on the eve of 336, prior to being readmitted to communion, and Athanasius exploited this humiliation as a sign that vindicated the orthodox position over the heretical, marking Arius' theology as out of bounds, and this kind rhetorical production of humiliation starts in the New Testament with the death of Judas.

so on, are all the terms deployed by Athanasius to construct an image of Arius and to socialize the laity to assimilate this constructed definition of Arianism. Fine also notes that particular reputations, once they become dominate, tend to persist in the absence of a credible alternative. This is the case with Arianism, insofar as the heretical construction of both Arius and Arianism, as authored primarily by Athanasius, persisted throughout history until attempts were made in the twentieth century to reconstruct Arius' reputation and reconsider the viability of Arian theology. In a sense, then, Athanasius created "Arianism," which suggests sectarianism, out of a dispute over specific theological ideas.

Chapter VI:
Conclusion (The End is the Beginning…)

A Brief History of Key Arian Scholarship: The Rhetorical Construction of Historical Memory

We have looked at how Athanasius used an ideologically informed rhetorical strategy to begin the process of constructing the memory of both the figure of Arius himself and the reputation of Arianism more broadly as a theological movement within the Christian community of the eastern Roman Empire circa the middle to late fourth century. Using the conceptual model of Fine, we can see how Athanasius is to be considered a reputational entrepreneur; he could construct and perpetuate a specific rendering of Arius/Arianism for his time because of his institutional placement as bishop of the Alexandrian church—a position that allowed for the kind of narrative facility Fine refers to as instrumental in constructing reputations. Further, because of his position within church, Athanasius had a unique avenue for the distribution of his version of Arius as the "true" picture to the community; lastly, Athanasius was certainly motivated to construct a particular Arian reputation as a means of reestablishing his power within the community at large.

As a way of concluding, I want to turn to attention to the way theological scholarship, in particular, has treated Arius and Arianism. The modern critical study of Arianism, as Rowan Williams asserts in his *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* begins in the nineteenth century (3), with Cardinal John Henry Newman's *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, but what Williams writes at the outset of his important study of Arius can serve as both a distillation and recapitulation of what I have been discussing in this study in various way up to this point; Williams' remarks are also clear articulation of how the

historical memory of Arianism—stemming from the characterizations provided by the writings of Athanasius—is already being perpetuated and historically represented throughout the next few centuries after Athanasius and into the medieval period. Williams writes:

> Arianism has often been regarded as the archetypal Christian deviation, something aimed at the very heart of the Christian confession. From this point of view of history it is hardly surprising: the crisis of the fourth century was the most dramatic internal struggle the Christian church had so far experienced; it generated the first creedal statement to claim universal, unconditional assent, and it became inextricably entangled with issues concerning the authority of political rulers in the affairs of the Church…the portrait [of Arius] is already taking shape in Epiphanius' work, well before the end of the fourth century…by the early medieval period, we find him represented alongside Judas in ecclesiastical art and the account of his [Arius'] death in the fourth-fifth-century is already clearly modeled on that of Judas in the Act of the Apostles (1).

Athanasius in his *Contra Arianos* referred to the Arians in terms of the figure of Judas with all that such a comparison implied, and so by way of Williams' characterization of the narratives concerning Arius' death it becomes evident that this representation of Arius/Arians as traitors to Jesus—begun with Athanasius—took hold in the collective memory and imagination of early orthodox Christians. As mentioned, modern critical attention to Arius has been a preoccupation of religious and historical scholars just within the last century. I want to pay brief attention to just four key works of British Arian scholarship during this period: from the nineteenth century there is John Henry

Newman's *The Arians of the Fourth Century (*1833*)*, and H.M. Gwatkin's *Studies of Arianism* (1900); from the twentieth century, there is Rowan Williams' *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (1987) and, lastly, R.P.C. Hanson's *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (1988).

These studies are substantial, important, and worthy of more attention than I can give here, but this is an area of future scholarship – to further interrogate the re-valuation of Arius and Arian theology as a viable model over and against the orthodox, or at least to see it as a legitimate alternative theological expression. My goal in the previous analysis was to demonstrate through extension how Halbwachs' notion of collective memory allows us to bring the Nicene controversy into the modern era, but situating it culturally as a perennial conflict. Further the idea that our construction of memory is always inherently "presentist" is operative in these historical renderings of the Arian conflict.

Both Newman and Gwatkin wrote their studies in response to the particular issues of their day—theological liberalism in the case of Newman, and positivism in the case of Gwatkin (see Wiles 1996). Newman writes, near the end of his book on the Arians, "the present perils with which our branch of the Church [the Anglican Church at the time][35] is beset bear a remarked resemblance to those of the fourth century" (qtd. in Wiles 168). Thus "Arians" became a term that referred to the liberal Protestant theological positions that were antithetical to orthodox positions. Here Newman clearly constructed the past in terms of his present and used the negative historic connotations of the term "Arians" as a way of linking his understanding of the orthodox as distinct from

[35] This interpolation is mine.

the heretic, and this can be read as an instance of collective remembering in which Newman participated in the old prejudices that linked Newman to the past, and which informed an understanding of Arianism up to that date.

In the case of Gwatkin, his study of the Arianism of the fourth century concerned the notion of God. Was God to be conceived as the transcendent clock-maker (the rational-scientific conception of God became prominent in his day with the rise of positivism) who set the cosmos in motion but never again intervened? Or was God to be understood as immanent in the world? For Gwatkin the transcendent/immanent distinction as it pertained to the notion of God that preoccupied the philosophers and theologians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was similar to the problem that informed the Arian controversy over the matter of God's involvement in the world via his full personification in Jesus.[36] The way Arius attempted to preserve a strict monotheism made Arius, for Gwatkin, the representative figure articulating the kind of notion of radical transcendence to which Gwatkin was opposed. Here again, Arius and the Arian position was construed in terms of the then contemporary concerns of Gwatkin. In both cases Newman and Gwatkin's respective church histories can be read as inherently presentist in their approach to the past—specifically the fourth century Arian conflict.

With respect to both Williams and Hanson, these scholars have recently attempted to recover Arius (particularly Williams) and have sought to define him not as a heretic, but as theologian with a legitimate faith and theological agenda that was distorted by the influence of Hellenistic philosophy in the shaping of its concepts. However, both Williams and Hanson ultimately reached the same general conclusion at the end of their

[36] (See Wiles, 1996) for a fuller treatment of this discussion concerning both Newman and Gwatkin in relation to their social and theological context.

writings—namely, that the failure of Arius/Arianism was a necessary and positive outcome. The studies completed by both Williams and Hanson affirmed, rather than argued this conclusion (see Wiles 181). Hanson and Williams argued for the eternal truths of Christianity, as though the truths were self-evident, and this, despite the attention paid by both Hanson and Williams to the influence of the Greek academic tradition that shaped Arian theology. Thus, Maurice Wiles in his monograph on Arianism correctly notes in this regard that "If Greek philosophical terms were a necessary tool for clarifying the faith, it is highly likely that they will have helped to mold the particular form that that clarification took. They are more than purely neutral devices for the clarification of ideas. The substance of the debate cannot be wholly separated from the historical thought-forms in terms of which it is conducted" (181); and this gets us back to Maurice Halbwachs' comments regarding the way religious collective memory often distinguishes itself by excising the temporal element from the articulation of its concepts—thereby referring to eternal truths as if these "truths" were divorced from the process of socio-historic construction. Both Hanson and Williams fall back into this tendency characteristic of religious collective memory.

While exploring the contemporary attempts to recover the value of Arius/Arian theology represents a fruitful scholarly enterprise, there are other areas that deserve more consideration. For example, the combative role of Athanasius is an important one with respect to Christianity's historic struggle for self-definition during late antiquity and, as such, it might be important, in order to develop this tale of religion, culture, and the social processes involved in knowledge legitimation that I've been pursuing, to situate this debate between Arius and Athanasius in terms of the differences between third century

and fourth century forms of knowledge, given that Arius was a product of the former, and Athanasius, the latter. With this distinction in mind, Richard Rubenstein notes:

> Emphasizing Jesus' humanity and God's transcendent otherness had never seemed heretical in the East. On the contrary subordinating the Son to the Father was a rational way of maintaining one's belief in a largely unknowable, utterly singular First Cause while picturing Christ as a usable model of human moral development. For young militants like Athanasius, however, ancient modes of thought and cultural values were increasingly irrelevant; humanism and rationalism were shallow, and Judaism was an offensive, anti-Christian faith (74).

Arius, as I have tried to show, is linked to the Greek philosophical tradition of Platonism, and Middle Platonism influenced the first great Christian systematic theologian, Origen of Alexandria, and this philosophical-theological tradition, likewise, influenced and informed the conceptual apparatus used by Arius to conceive the relation between God the Father and Jesus the Son. Some other avenues left to explore consist of considering early biblical hermeneutics, and early philosophies of language that may have influenced the theological conceptions I've pursued throughout this dissertation.

Lastly, what can a study of the rhetorical forces at work in the paradigmatic conflict between rival notions of divinity enacted at the intersection of the political and the theological, as demonstrated at Nicaea, teach us about the current, (and perhaps perennial) intersection between the secular and sacred in our contemporary moment? Violence and scapegoating persists between Israel and Palestine, between Shiites and Sunnis, between the religious left and right in America, only to name a few general cases of religious conflict. Can the study of rhetoric, conceived as the analysis of ideology in

discourse, illuminate our current socio-religious conflicts? How do the current metaphors we use to conceive the relation between the human and divine, as well as between self and other inform our own politics and subject positions, and thus our behavior on the stage of history? How can an appreciation and better understanding of the role and function of language be used to mitigate the differences that separate us, rather than as a wedge that divides us? I postulate the possibility of a rhetoric of hope.

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